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The FORELOPERS

I. N. PHIPPS

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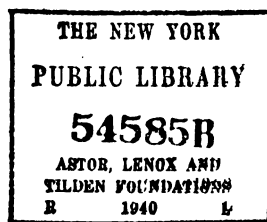
THE FORELOPERS

A Romance of Colonial Days

BY
I. N. PHIPPS



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FOREWORD

The wan shadows of a near-spent twilight filled the valley and lay upon the river, giving to the surface of its waters the grim and ghastly hue that is sometimes seen on the face of one who has at last yielded to the ravages of a long and wasting sickness.

More than half an hour before, my new acquaintance and I, with pipes lighted and our chairs tilted backward against the low porch railing of the isolated farmhouse there in the mountains, where we had almost simultaneously sought and secured accommodations for the night, had seen the sun, showing clean-edged and blood-red through the orange-colored haze intervening, touch the rim of the horizon, linger for a moment, and then slip from sight, its departing rays illuminating for a few seconds the fringe of trees at the distant turn in the valley down which the river flowed.

Here and there a star showed faintly in the east, while from the sparsely timbered hillside nearby came the weird and plaintive cry of the whippoorwill or the hoot of an owl out of the gloom of the densely wooded hollow across the river, answered by another equally as deep-toned and dreary sounding from the top of an adjacent hill.

To one unaccustomed to the evening and night voices of a wood and mountainous country these sounds were more or less depressing. But I, having been reared amidst such, had been accustomed to the like all my life, and therefore gave them little heed. With my new acquaintance, however, it was quite different. From the first I had perceived that these sounds both irritated and depressed him, and was not surprised, therefore, when he finally rose suddenly to his feet, knocked the ashes from his pipe, and commenced to walk up and down the porch.

"How the deuce do you suppose these people endure the like of this evening after evening, summer in and summer out!" he exclaimed after one or two turns up and down the porch. "It lacks only the scream of a panther, the howl of a wolf, or a glimpse of a skulking Indian to give one a forceful idea of some of the horrors experienced by the forelopers of civilization, among whom were my ancestors, one of them in particular being one of the very first white men to hazard a trip across the Alleghanies into the western wilds.

"A manuscript of his memoirs that I chance to have shows his to have been an eventful life, to say the least of it. I have read it many times, but never until now understood what a dreary life the pioneers of the wilderness led."

Now, it so happened that my present mission there in the mountains was to try to gather data for a story. Hence, he had no sooner intimated the exist-

ence of such a manuscript than I became all attention. Then, concealing in a measure the deep interest that I felt concerning it, I asked him where the manuscript was, intimating that I considered it scarcely probable that he carried it with him, yet faintly hoping that such might prove to be the case, as it did, he replying that it was even then in his saddle-bags up-stairs in the room that had been assigned to us.

"If you feel that you would like to while away the evening looking over it," he continued, "we will go to our room and you can do so. It would certainly be more pleasant than sitting out here, beset by such dismal sounds, I should think."

Thanking him for the opportunity, I rose to my feet by way of signifying my readiness to accompany him. Going to the room that had been assigned to us on the second floor, as already stated, we lighted a lamp found on a small table there, and in a few minutes he placed in my hand a compact little bundle, consisting of seven small books of the kind called memorandum, all neatly and firmly tied together with a long, narrow, yellowish-looking raw-hide thong of opossum or coonskin.

The backs of these little books were of thick, pliable paper, finished in imitation of sheepskin, and all seemed well preserved, as if they had been carefully handled and cared for by each succeeding generation or descendant into whose hands they had come as a heritage from that remote ancestor.



They were numbered, as I discovered after untying them, from one to seven respectively, and across the center of the front cover of each, just below the figure that showed its place in the series, was inscribed this legend, to wit:

"THE FORELOPERS: Being the Memoirs of
Marcus Law."

"The title sounds well enough, at all events," I thought. "Now for the contents," and thereupon I fell to and read the story, which the reader will find in the following pages, without any changes from that found in the original manuscript except such as the difference between the orthography in use in the days of the said "Forelopers" and that of our own, made necessary by way of modernizing it.



THE FORELOPERS

CHAPTER I

Having never before taken up my pen with the idea of transferring to paper the memories and experiences of my somewhat checkered and romantic career, or of essaying a narrative more pretentious or of greater scope than might be contained in any one of the occasional short epistles penned to a friend, I approach the present undertaking with more or less trepidation. However, in the hope of partly stifling my diffidence and effecting a beginning of these memoirs, I will say that my name is Law—Marcus Law—and that I come of as good stock as Great Britain can boast, barring only such as can truthfully claim descent from royalty itself.

Moreover, had it not chanced in the first quarter of the present century (now so near its close that the beginning of the next is reckoned by months instead of years), during one of the more acute variations of the religious frenzy that had beset Great Britain with varying fervency for several decades, that a scion from one of the more noble and

ancient family trees over there was, of his own initiative, superinduced by papistical intolerance, transplanted here in this new land of America, I might now, belike, be wearing a high sounding title, like others of the selfsame family tree, whom neither fortune nor desire ever led beyond its noble environments.

I do not mention these things, however, with the idea of creating a favorable bias in the minds of those not above being influenced in their estimate of a man by such a paltry, meaningless thing as a title, whether the same is accompanied by nobility of character or not, but merely by way of fixing in the minds of whomsoever may chance to read these memoirs my approximate place in the social calendar. For although it might be safe to leave my readers to make their own deductions and decide as to the social stratum to which I should be assigned, I am nevertheless reluctant to do so in view of the fact that society here in the New World is a most incongruous mixture, consisting of contributions from all the older regions of the world, and from every level and condition of mankind, not even excepting criminals of every character and degree of crime, whom those in authority over there found it expedient to transport to these shores, ostensibly to strengthen the hearts and hands of the meager and ever menaced population of the New, but in reality the better to insure the peace and dignity of the Old World, if not, indeed, to preserve their very lives and property.



Nor is there any record or other evidence to show that those who had it in their power thus to shift the burden and menace from themselves ever became a prey to their consciences by reason of this imposition. They did it, possibly, under the idea that another burden more or less added to the hardships that were already so onerous as to be scarcely tolerable could make little or no difference to the people here, whose tolerance they seemed to think would brook anything that they were a mind to impose upon them.

It happened that my native borough and place of abode was Hartford, in the good Province or Colony of Connecticut. Our family consisted of my father, mother, sister Jocelyn, and myself. Our domicile was a hewed-log structure, all neatly chinked and daubed, and covered with clapboards in the manner peculiar to the times, each overlapping tier of boards weighted down with poles lodged behind pegs driven into the underlying timbers. It was located on one of the principal streets but little more than a stone's throw from the Governor's far more imposing domicile and diagonally across the street from the somewhat pretentious home of the Honorable Samuel Wyllys, and but a little way from the two ordinaries or public inns that Hartford afforded.

I had scarcely more than attained my twenty-fifth year when the destiny of the people of all New England was consigned to that titled upstart, Sir Edmund Andros, by that most profligate and blood-thirsty potentate, King James II. And while this

papistical limb of the Stuarts was reveling in the blood of his subjects over there, his imp here was exercising his diabolical ingenuity in devising ways and measures whereby he might harass and fleece those whose misfortune it had been to fall under his vindictive and avaricious sway, more particularly the people of Connecticut, against whom he seemed to have an insatiable grudge.

The Assembly met there in October, 1687, my father being one of the members. And I happened, like many others, to be present in the Assembly room when his Excellency, Sir Edmund Andros, under the protection of an imposing guard, presented himself therein and demanded the Charter, and dissolved the Government then existing under it. And although the Assembly had been in a measure prepared for these things, yet the greatest excitement immediately followed this demand and the dissolution of the Government.

Many of the more daring, my father among them, were instantly upon their feet, protesting against this high-handed proceeding, and declaring in the most positive and fervent manner that they would not surrender their Charter.

Governor Treat was there and protested likewise, saying how he deprecated this action on the part of his Excellency, at the same time calling attention to the hardships that his people had suffered while establishing the Colony, and beseeching him to desist from his purpose, since parting with their be-

loved Charter would be almost like parting with life itself.

Yet, with all this, his Excellency persisted in his demands, backing them up meanwhile with the most direful threats, if it were not forthcoming within a given time; but all to no avail. For those were hardy souls in that Assembly, and it would have taken far more than the irate blusterings of his Excellency, or his lurid rehearsals of his Majesty's displeasure, in the event of their holding out against his demands, to have intimidated and weakened them in their determination to resist the surrender of their charter.

Nevertheless, as if they had realized, after the first violent outbreak of resentment and show of noncompliance, that discretion in the form of a mien that would lead him to believe that they were reconsidering the matter, and in the end would probably yield, might better serve the purpose that they had suddenly conceived and whispered among themselves, they contained themselves in seeming patience, the quicker witted of them taking the lead and fencing for time by adroitly discussing the matter *pro* and *con*, their countenances meanwhile veiled with an expression calculated to lead him to believe that while they regretted exceedingly to part with their Charter, they nevertheless felt reluctant to incur the displeasure of his Majesty the King by withholding it. So, by such cunning tactics, they kept the matter in the balance, as it were, and his Excellency in suspense, yet hopeful, until well toward the close

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of the day, at which time the Charter was produced and laid on the table in the presence of all, as if it had been virtually settled that it would be surrendered.

By this time a vast crowd was gathered in and about the Assembly room, among whom were men of mettle and daring, equal to any hazard or enterprise deemed necessary or expedient in such an emergency as the prospect gave promise of.

Finally night came on, the candles were lighted. My position chanced to be near the table on which the Charter had been laid. And at about the time the candles were lighted Captain Wadsworth took a position upon my left and nudged me in a knowing way, though at the moment I did not grasp the meaning of this, nor of the look of resolute purpose wherewith he observed the exact location of the instrument upon the table. Presently all the candles were suddenly extinguished, and in that same instant I felt, rather than saw, Captain Wadsworth glide from my side.

Directly the candles were relighted, and I perceived the Charter was no longer in its place on the table, and that Captain Wadsworth was nowhere to be seen. It afterward developed that the Charter had been spirited away and concealed in a large hollow oak in front of the home of his Majesty's justice, the Honorable Samuel Wyllys, a near neighbor of ours, as before intimated.

CHAPTER II

As already stated, it was about this time that I attained the age of twenty-five. My training up to this time (and subsequently, for that matter) was such only as might be acquired from the inefficient drill-masters on the periodical muster-days, and from service in the trainband during our engagements with the Indians, whose ever recurring uprisings made such service quite frequent. Yet, notwithstanding this lack of systematic and efficient training, my proficiency in the kind of warfare best adapted to the times, and to the enemy that we had most frequently to contend with, was of a nature so pronounced and excellent that my services as a leader were ever in demand, especially in all the more difficult and exigent cases that the natural meanness and cunning of the savages made possible.

It is possible, however (if I may be allowed to say so without being considered vain and boastful, as I hope I may), that my well known daring under extraordinary circumstances, and my unusual prowess in a rough and tumble engagement, had more to do with my being selected as the leader in hazardous expeditions than anything else. For I know there were several among my associates equally as well versed in warcraft as I.

Likewise I hope I may say, without being reckoned vain and egotistic, that I was not lacking in good looks and a manly, prepossessing form, standing something over six feet in my moccasins, with broad, square shoulders, erect carriage, and regular features. And I had the strength and activity that comported with my appearance.

Furthermore, and this is pertinent in this connection, I was, up to this time, "heart-whole and fancy-free," notwithstanding there were in our community many eligible young women, both as to good looks and what not, yet not one of them had ever appealed to me in a way to captivate my heart, albeit I was quite a gallant among them and therefore lacked not for opportunities to know them well and discover their winning qualities, in which, no less than in comeliness, many of them abounded.

It remained, therefore, for a newcomer into our midst to awaken my heart and impart to it that blissful thrill designated *love*. And thereby hangs a tale of such vicissitudes as rarely comes within the compass of a single love-affair, the nature and pathos of which must give to these memoirs whatever of interest one may find in them.

It is scarcely probable that outside of the Colony of Connecticut and the Colonies immediately adjoining it anything much is known of the feverish agitation anent witchcraft (so called), which has troubled the course of events more or less from time to time of late years, though of course there has never

occurred any such preternatural things, in fact, as witchcraft.

This merely by way of showing the ignorance and superstition of the people among whom my lot was cast and as a forecast of events that have an immediate connection with the subject matter of these memoirs, which I greatly fear I shall find more pleasure in chronicling than my readers will in perusing, seeing I am likely to prove a poor story-teller at best, albeit I have a striking and most impressive knowledge of the things that I would impart to these pages for their edification. For no one could be more conscious of his imperfections in the matter of diction than I, or be more handicapped by a lack of practice in the noble art of composition.

The addition of a family more or less in those days to the population of the town was more a cause for congratulation than for speculation or idle comment. For whatever enhanced the strength of the community for resisting the frequent attacks of the Indians was naturally a source of great satisfaction, and hence the advent of any one was always hailed with great pleasure, and the people all vied with one another in tendering favors, and in affording them the comforts of such accommodations in their homes as they themselves enjoyed, until such time as they might be enabled to get suitably domiciled in a home of their own making or choosing.

My reference to the fact that I was entirely free from any heart entanglement up to a given period in

my life will no doubt be called to mind by the reader. Well, it was not, therefore, with any preconceit, or feeling of presentiment, as you will, that my heart was destined to encounter its fate through that little commonplace adventure, when I, along with other young men, took my way down to the boat-landing on a certain cold, yet somewhat pleasant, afternoon, some weeks after the unpleasant interruption of the Assembly by the visit of Sir Edmund Andros, whither we were led by no other motive than an idle curiosity to behold what manner of people they were who, it had just been rumored, were landing there, evidently, it was thought, with the idea of locating in Hartford.

For, albeit such events were of almost daily occurrence, we young folks had more or less spare time on our hands in times of peace and plenty, and rarely ever failed to give rein to our curiosity by thus faring forth to the river and watching them debark, when accessions came by water instead of overland through the wilderness, as not infrequently happened to be the case in those days, when people found it expedient for one cause or another to shift from one part to another of his Majesty's dominions.

But on this occasion, when we arrived upon the scene, the newcomers were already more than half way up the river bank from the landing, where their small two-masted boat rode at anchor. The party consisted of a middle-aged man and woman, and a young lady, whose resemblance to the strikingly

handsome dame gave assurance that she was their daughter. And it was easy and reasonable to surmise, from the cut and quality of their apparel, that they were people of more than passing consequence. Also my eyes told me at a single glance that the daughter had not in the whole Colony an equal, or even a tolerable competitor, for beauty of countenance, grace of form, and comely bearing, if indeed in the whole of his Majesty's dominions on this side of the waters.

How my heart leaped and thrilled at the very first glimpse of her it would be folly to attempt to describe. Wherefore, about the only way that I can give an idea of the sensation that convinced me of my heart's hopeless thralldom is to say simply that I was desperately smitten and inextricably enamoured of her at first sight, however much some may doubt it.

It is not at all unlikely, therefore, that the instant desire that I experienced for a speedy and proper opportunity to cultivate her acquaintance influenced my action upon their arrival at the top of the river bank. At any rate, I doffed my head-piece, introduced myself, and offered my services in carrying a part of the luggage that they were laden with, and in almost the same breath tendered them the hospitality of our home until such time as they might be able to provide themselves with an abode of their own, feeling quite sure that my father and mother would commend me for my forethought, and treat

them with the utmost hospitality during their sojourn under our roof, should they accept my invitation.

And although my hearty and urgent tender of the shelter and accommodations of our home was accepted, yet it was not without a bit of quibbling on the part of the good dame, who interposed the excuse that it might not be altogether agreeable or convenient for my folks to receive such an accession to their home without notice or warning in advance. But after assurance that the people of Hartford had established a custom of receiving into their homes and entertaining newcomers offhand, so to speak, and without such formalities as she was basing her excuse upon, she laughingly waived it and accepted my invitation, and the trio accompanied me to my father's house without further parley.

CHAPTER III

As previously stated, I had introduced myself to the newcomers at the very outset, and had thereupon learned that their name was Crandal. Further along it developed that the master's given name was George Carrol, the dame's Mary Constance, and the daughter's Helen Elizabeth. Also it came out during their sojourn at our house that the head of the family had held a commission as Captain of a company of his Majesty's Regulars prior to that ill-timed uprising headed by the unfortunate Monmouth, and that an incident connected with that rebellion had led to their removal to this country about two years before their appearance in Hartford, the nature of which incident the reader will learn later on in these memoirs.

That there had been some cause for their change of residence from Boston to Hartford other than the mere hope of bettering their circumstances, an occasional inadvertent remark of one or another of them made it easy enough to surmise. But it was several weeks before that happened which led to the disclosure of the true cause of the change.

In the meantime the acquaintance between them and us had ripened into a warm friendship, the

while my love for the fair and winsome Helen Elizabeth grew apace, if indeed any accession to the initial passion were possible, except in so far as the lively and harassing apprehension that I experienced as to whether she in any degree reciprocated my love served to emphasize it. For, priding myself on being a gentleman, I could not, under the circumstances that had placed me in the position of host, afford to press matters with the idea of ascertaining the state of her feelings toward me, albeit, in the very moment in which I had lost my heart to her, I had offered them the hospitality of our home with some such idea in view.

Governor Treat and his wife had fallen into the habit of throwing open the doors of the mansion to the young people of Hartford once a month during the fall and winter seasons, where they were permitted to dance and otherwise amuse themselves during the evening. One of these monthly occurrences fell on the evening before the Crandals were to quit our house to take possession of the home that they had leased and fitted up with the household goods that they had brought down from Boston with them, and of course my sister Jocelyn, Miss Crandal, and I were there. Furthermore, by way of showing Miss Crandal the courtesy that he was accustomed to accord a visitor or a newcomer in our midst, the Governor chose her to dance with him the minuet wherewith it was his habit to inaugurate the evening's festivities at these monthly functions. For, although

not what might be called one of a gay and festive nature, he nevertheless enjoyed the company of young people, and never failed to take some part in such pastime as they might elect to amuse themselves with.

I have already dilated somewhat effusively on Miss Crandal's beauty and exceeding gracefulness, and will therefore content myself with saying, in reference to her charms, that if she had impressed me to the degree of utterly and hopelessly captivating my heart in the soiled and bedraggled garb incident to a long and tedious trip by boat, such as she had just ended when I got my first glimpse of her, as the reader knows, it should be no matter for wonder that I was literally beside myself with admiration when I beheld her dressed in a manner befitting this occasion, making her appear yet more lovely in my eyes, especially after I had witnessed the incomparable suppleness and grace with which she moved in the minuet with the Governor. The coy and dainty manner in which she cut the coupé was such as to elicit a murmur of surprise and admiration from all, followed a moment or so later by open applause from the onlookers.

Ah, how I envied the Governor that brief little dance! How I longed for its yet speedier termination, so that I might get an opportunity to pour into her ears, as I had suddenly determined I would do, something of the love that was well-nigh consuming me, as I stood there entranced by the rhythmical

flutter of her dainty, slippered feet 'neath the lace and flounces of her snowy petticoats.

She was dressed—but then I am too utterly ignorant in matters appertaining to feminine apparel to attempt a description of her garb, other than to say her gown was of a pink color and gauzy texture, cut low in the neck, with large, loose-flowing sleeves, and, to my inexperienced eye at least, had the appearance of being two garments in one, the outer one of which was a bit shorter than the other, brought together at the waist-line only, and held in place by a girdle a shade or so darker than the fabric of the gown itself, the buckle of which was set with ruby-red brilliants.

At the conclusion of this initial dance, the Governor conducted her back to the little group, composed of my sister Jocylin and three or four other girls, from which he had led her, and then, after thanking her in a manner more effusive and ardent than my childish jealousy made seem justifiable for the honor that she had conferred upon him, wished her a pleasant evening, and bowed himself away in the courtly manner peculiar to him.

Quickly thereafter I sought her amidst the crowd that had immediately encompassed and deluged her with compliments for the way she had acquitted herself in the minuet, and, at the risk of being considered extremely selfish and of making enemies of some of the other young men, lured her away to a kind of cubby or alcove at the south side of the hall, which

Mrs. Treat used as a sort of conservatory, the partly draped entrance to which gave that air of semi-seclusion than which there is no retreat more alluring to lovers, meseems, except it be one of a still more shadowy or pronounced seclusion.

Here it was in this quiet little retreat that I, pretending a grievance, received the first intimation that I had yet had that my love was in any measure returned, provided, of course, that my interpretation of the signs I had judged from were correct. On our way over there she had promised me the pleasure of the first dance with her, yet, as the reader knows, this had gone to the Governor. Hence, by feigning displeasure at what I knew she could not have declined without a break with her manners and the loss of an opportunity such as no true woman cares to forfeit, I brought into her beautiful and joyous face an expression like which nothing less than love for the man that she believes she has offended ever brings into a woman's face.

"The memory of a broken pledge, such as you have favored me with this evening, Miss Crandal, is not a very pleasant thing to have to carry away from a place or occasion of which one had entertained the most pleasurable anticipations," I complained.

"Broken pledge? Why, Lieutenant Law, what can you mean? If I have broken faith in anything with you here to-night, I assure you I am wholly unconscious of it, and beg you will explain," she replied earnestly, the pleased, happy expression that

her success in the minuet with the Governor had imparted to her beautiful face giving way to the look of deep concern above referred to.

"Did you not promise me the first dance?" I asked, unable to suppress a smile of exultation over the assurance that her apparent concern afforded me, which she evidently interpreted as a truce and the end of my pretense of a slight at her hands.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, seeing the joke and laughing, "that dance doesn't count, you know. And even if it did, what girl would not throw over a mere Lieutenant for a Governor, if the opportunity came, as it did to me?"

I was always slow-witted, and therefore never apt at repartee, and consequently this jesting little retort of hers had to go altogether unchallenged, thus leaving the joke on me, after all.

By this time the music had started up again, and as couples were already taking their places for a cotillion, she, seeming to divine my purpose in luring her off into this retreat, and, with a woman's strange whim, bent on thwarting it, rose to her feet and insisted that she was ready to redeem her pledge by dancing with me. A moment later we left our little retreat and took our places on the floor, thus completing the necessary number of couples for the cotillion.

A moment later, in compliance with the prompter's "S'lute your partners an' balance all!" we curtsied to each other, and forthwith the rhythmical patter

and shuffle of feet on the bare floor indicated that the dance was on in full swing. How easily and gracefully she carried herself through the mazes of the intricate figures into which the prompter's sonorous voice hurried us! And how conscious I was of the awkward, ungainly figure that I cut beside her!

And oh, how the love-tempered blood of my heart pulsed and raced through my veins at the warm, soft touch of her hands, the half shy, half challenging glance of her eye! For the very first time in my life I realized the supreme ecstasy of living. New vistas were opened before me—rose-bordered ways that led away into a region where only Love was, and where the only voices were Love's, and the tender cooing of doves—into a region whose atmosphere was redolent with Love's sweet fragrances alone, resounding with no strains but Love's own sweet harmonies, and whose only light was the light from her bright eyes. We were both silent during the cotillion, I from an excess of happiness, and she—well, I know not why, but was egotistic enough to believe that she was silent from the same cause.

When the first dance was over we repaired again to the little alcove where, happily finding my tongue and the power of utterance once more, I poured out my love with such ardor and vehemency that she appeared to take fright, and would, I verily believe, have fled from me back to the others in the room if I had not gently restrained her until the full import and significance of my declaration had dawned upon

her. For, notwithstanding my egotistic conception a few moments before as to the cause of her apparent happiness, she was evidently wholly unprepared for my passionate declaration of love, indicating that her silence had not been the effect of a blissful consciousness that I loved her, as I had flattered myself that it was.

Nevertheless, after an interval she appeared less inclined to escape me and the seclusion of the cubby. Then came signs of capitulation, and presently a timid confession that my love was returned measure for measure, though I doubted that part of it. For how was it possible for her to love me with a like degree of intensity? But oh, what a flood of joy came with that assurance, which, great as it then seemed, broke all bounds when a few minutes later she became my promised bride!

But I will not tire the reader further with these memories. Instead we will move on to other events of the evening wherein he may find more entertainment than this rehearsal can possibly afford him.

It was not an elaborate ball by any means, but one of those simple, primitive, and informal affairs with which the Governor and his dame were wont to entertain the young folks of Hartford now and then, as previously intimated, where the mirthful spirits and gay humor of their guests were rarely ever restrained by the presence of strangers, noted or otherwise. Not that we ever transcended the bounds of polite and decorous abandon in our pursuit of the pleasures inci-

dent to a dance and the social intercourse peculiar to young people of lifelong acquaintance, yet with the free exercise and enjoyment of which the presence of strangers often interferes, especially if such be people of note.

Miss Crandal and I lingered in the alcove through the second cotillion, and at the beginning of the third my friend and intimate from childhood, Roland Wadsworth, came in and reminded her that she had promised him that number, and I had to be content and allow her to be borne away.

CHAPTER IV

From the silent, pleasurable mood into which I had drifted after my friend Roland had carried my fiancée away, I was presently aroused by the consciousness that the tones of fiddle and flute had become less lively and riotous, and the prompter's voice more subdued than hitherto. Glancing out between the drapings of the cubby entrance toward the dancers and onlookers, I perceived that all were looking toward the main entrance in a way that betokened that something of an extraordinary nature was transpiring, or that some one of consequence had just been admitted. The latter proved to be the case. For, upon peeping out from the cubby, I beheld the Governor and Mrs. Treat welcoming a couple of distinguished-looking gentlemen.

One of the two, a tall, graceful, and exceedingly handsome young man of about my own age, held his head-piece in his hand, and acknowledged the greetings of the host and hostess in a manner that left no doubt of his familiarity with, and adeptness in, the use of all those little amenities and tricks of politeness peculiar to those accustomed to meeting and mingling with people of the better class.

The other gentleman, whose stature was less and

proportions not so graceful, nor face so prepossessing, seemed equally, if not indeed more, at his ease, yet impressed me as an exceedingly odd, not to say ill-mannered person, in that he persisted in wearing his head-piece throughout the entire greetings and interchange of pleasantries,—not unconsciously, it appeared, but purposely and from habit, judging from his easy manner and self-centered air, and patronizing pose.

And although not exactly prepossessed in his favor, I instinctively felt that he was a personage of more than passing note, yet one whom those in the ordinary walks of life could approach with the assurance that they would meet with a courteous and kindly reception, albeit with no promise of fair and impartial or unselfish treatment where his personal interests or ambitions were concerned. For there appeared in his face, softness of speech, and suavity of manner that which, to the student of human nature, was an index to a character lacking in most of the finer and higher ideals of honor. In other words, one who would sacrifice the dearest friend, nor stop short of anything less than dishonor itself, to secure the countenance of kings and other great personages. Such at least was my estimate of the man that did not doff his head-piece, even to the Governor's wife. Yet for all this I cannot say that he was even remotely repugnant to me, or that I experienced the least aversion to him, for the reason, possibly, that he was a man of unusual magnetism,

and I was unconsciously influenced and prepossessed in his favor.

On the other hand, toward the younger and handsomer man I immediately experienced the most bitter aversion, albeit I had not then the faintest idea who he was, much less of the diabolical rôle that he was destined to play in my affairs. How could I, except through something in the nature of a psychological forecast?

At this point I became conscious that the third dance had drawn to a close and that couples, discoursing in subdued tones, were moving about where I stood, at the threshold of the cubby, which had afforded my love and me seclusion and the opportunity for ascertaining the secret of each other's heart.

A moment later I felt a touch upon my elbow, and looking round, I met the eyes of my newly betrothed, Miss Crandal. And although I did not then know her sufficiently to be able to interpret her emotions from the expression of her face, as I afterward learned to, I nevertheless realized that something was wrong—that she was laboring under some sort of nervous strain, the nature of which, however, my dull wits were unable to conjecture. Not only was the expression of her face such as to attract my attention, but her voice shook perceptibly when she said, as she laid her hand on my arm:

“You see I am already presumptuous enough to avail myself of the privileges of an affianced bride,

even before the idea of such a sweet relationship has become a familiar thought. Love often tempts a woman to do and to say many unseemly things, no doubt, and fear sometimes even more. Yet, believe me, dear, neither the one nor the other could have brought me to you like this, in the absence of the sweet relationship that I now thank heaven I bear toward you, had it not been seconded by a danger like that which now menaces me and the blissful assurance that you would not only gladly have me near you, but would shield me, should the occasion for your interference arise, as it possibly may."

She had spoken in a low tone, but rapidly and with increasing agitation, her eyes meantime upon the group at the door, consisting of the Governor, his wife, and the two strangers, in one or both of the latter of whom evidently lurked the menace that she hinted at. But I did not ask her any questions until after I had conducted her back to that now thrice blessed retreat where, as an earnest of my love and fealty to her and her cause, whatever it might be, I caught her to my breast and kissed her passionately.

But we had scarcely more than seated ourselves when we were interrupted by the appearance of the Governor, his wife, and the two strangers. Thereat we both arose to our feet, I with less grace than alacrity, I fear, but she with a gracefulness and dignity from which all outward traces of alarm and trepidation had gone.

Governor Treat at once introduced the elderly and more portly of the two, who, aside from his seemingly unyielding habit of not removing his head-piece, even out of deference to ladies, acknowledged the introduction to Miss Crandal with a courtliness and grace that I had never seen excelled and to myself with a cordiality that was quite captivating, as became Sir William Penn.

Thereupon Mrs. Treat, with the other and younger man at her side, advanced and said: "Miss Crandal, if I am not mistaken or have not been misinformed, you and Lieutenant Highland are old acquaintances and therefore need no introduction here at this chance meeting."

As she concluded he took a step forward, spoke somewhat effusively and extended his hand in the seemingly hearty manner peculiar to the primitive social custom of the New World. But the only acknowledgment that he received was a slight inclination of the head and an unintelligible murmur from the lady at my side. And to say that I was deeply mystified by her ungracious manner toward him is to put it mildly indeed. For albeit never effusive and demonstrative, like many other young ladies, she had always, in the little while I had known her, impressed me as the very embodiment of graciousness. Why, then, this cool, yea, rude treatment of an old acquaintance?

Immediately following this little incident, which had no doubt put the other witnesses of it to guessing

at its cause, possibly, as it had me, he and I were introduced. And that which each of us read in the eye of the other was a challenge to the death, though for my life I could not have told why. But he knew.

The few words (which mere politeness, particularly courtesy to host and hostess, made incumbent upon us) that passed between us were commonplace enough and certainly of no import in this connection. Suffice it to say that the words of each of us had in them the ring of a challenge, though perceptible to us alone possibly. For some unknown cause I hated him as I had never hated any one before, and I felt that I would welcome any sort of a provocation to vent my ire in a hand-to-hand encounter, if perchance he had the mettle to stand up to me in a hand-to-hand conflict, as I did him the credit to believe he had, judging from the defiant poise of his head and the reckless glint of his eye.

Meanwhile the Governor, Mrs. Treat, and the other two formed a little group slightly apart from Lieutenant Highland and myself, and engaged in conversation, the purport of which appeared to be nothing more than the little nothings that usually characterize the talk of people that really have nothing in common to converse about, yet feel the necessity of saying something, howsoever prosy and irrelevant such may be.

Of a sudden, however, I caught the sound of Miss Crandal's voice, and albeit not high-pitched, it was nevertheless distinct, tense, and acrimonious, carry-

ing something of the ring of steel glancing against flint. Turning quickly, I saw that she faced and was addressing the Quaker. What lay back of it, or what had precipitated the tirade of invective with which she was bombarding him, I knew not, nor could at the moment surmise. Bitter contempt and withering scorn showed in her attitude and rang in her words. With head erect, eyes flashing, and breast heaving, she was saying:

"It was not enough, sir, that we had barely emerged from the horrors of the bloody Assizes, but you, when others, of far less prestige to their credit and therefore far more in need of the paltry recompense it would have yielded them, declined the odious commission of the heartless queen's equally heartless maids of honor, must needs volunteer your services to prosecute to the bitter end the extortion of blood-money from the already sorely afflicted parents of us poor thoughtless girls who marched in that procession and presented the flag to the hapless Monmouth on that most unfortunate occasion.

"I had never expected to see your hateful face again, much less to have the opportunity thus to vent the pent-up indignation of my heart against you or any of those that so heartlessly preyed upon the people of my native town of Taunton, which we felt the necessity of leaving, and of seeking a haven here in this new land, lest we again should become the object of additional extortion, notwithstanding your assurance that there would be nothing more to fear



after the heavy toll you exacted from my father through your lurid representations of the horrible fate that awaited me, his only child, if it were not forthcoming to the last farthing.

"The unexpected sight of you here to-night brought back to me the memory of the great wrong that I, and those dear to me, suffered through you and those you so faithfully served, and nothing, it seems to me, short of death, could have prevented me from giving vent to the tide of indignation and bitter contempt that welled up in my heart at the first glimpse of your hateful face.

"And do you wonder at it—wonder that I hate you as I have never hated, or never expect to hate, any one else on earth?"

By this time, feeling that she might be overcome by her emotions, I had placed myself by her side, ready to help or support her, should the more than half expected collapse occur. But I had mistaken the mettle of the woman that I so ardently loved. For there was no sign of such a thing as she turned to the Governor and his wife and tendered an apology for having, as she broadly put it, so grossly transgressed their hospitality by thus assailing another guest in language less refined and ladylike than forceful.

Presently the noted Quaker, now somewhat recovered from the embarrassment into which her scathing denunciation had thrown him, said:

"My dear young lady, had I wist that, on the occasion of my call here to-night to pay my respects to

Governor Treat and his good wife and incidentally beg clemency for one of the Friends that hath become entangled in some of the laws existing in this Colony against the free exercise of the faith that we profess, I should meet thee or any other of the unfortunate victims of the extortion to which thou hast alluded, I would have deferred it till the morrow, nor given thee opportunity to avail thyself of the old provocation to vent thy feelings against me, the hapless, yet by no means willing, instrument of the Queen's unscrupulous maids of honor that thou dost believe me to be.

"If thou hadst known that I undertook that unsavory mission not only to protect thee and other fair maids in the same predicament from yet more excessive extortion than I levied and collected, but also from a fate that had left thee bereft of that which all true and virtuous maids treasure above price, thou hadst doubtless been less severe in thy arraignment of me. For Jeffreys, who would not have let thee off with a single farthing of thy quota of the grand total of the seven thousand pounds sterling that he had fixed as the sum to be extorted, had secretly planned that certain of his conscienceless henchmen might prey upon the person of the fairest of the young ladies involved, which, coming to my ears in the nick of time, induced me to go hurriedly to the Queen and tender my services in that unpleasant affair.

"And, seeing that I levied and collected scarcely



more than one-third of the sum first determined upon by Jeffreys and in all probability save thee from the fate that I have hinted at, I had never regarded my part in that affair as other than an act of humanity.

"However, looking at it from thy standpoint, it is not strange that thou dost harbor such feelings, and I cannot say that I blame thee for thy bitter tirade against me.

"That now, my dear young lady, is my defense," went on Mr. Penn in his mild, gentle way, "whether thou art disposed to credit it or not. Yet I would that thou couldst freely believe me and make allowances accordingly. For I would so much prefer to have thee think temperately, yea, even kindly, of me than otherwise.

"Nevertheless, rest assured that I entertain for thee nothing but the most kindly thoughts and feelings. Moreover, should the time ever come when a word or an effort of mine would avail thee anything, hesitate not to call upon me, and I will respond to thy appeal just as if this night's affair had never occurred.

"And now what more can I say to ameliorate thy feelings toward me except to repeat that, should the time ever come when I might perchance be of use to thee and I am in hailing distance, thou wilt call me?"

Here now was a pretty kettle of fish and a nut to crack which I greatly wondered how my fiancée would manage. For if he had spoken truly, as scarcely any

one that had heard and observed him could doubt he had, the matter appeared in quite a new guise and entailed upon her some sort of an apology, if she would set herself right with the fair-minded Governor and his equally generous-minded wife, to say nothing about what was properly due to the noted Quaker for the injustice done to him.

But these reflections of mine were suddenly cut short by a harsh, not to say sardonic, laugh, following immediately the closing remarks of Mr. Penn, causing all to look toward Lieutenant Highland, who, standing a little back and to one side, appeared to have been an attentive and interested auditor of all that had been said, and who proceeded to cap his malignant "Ha, ha," with these significant but somewhat enigmatical words:

"And as the time is coming, and now is, perhaps, judging from certain rather incriminating insinuations anent your exercise of the arts of witchcraft, when Sir William Penn's interposition in your behalf might prove a godsend, Miss Crandal, it might be a good idea to bury the hatchet, and get yourself in an attitude to accept gracefully, and without the embarrassing sensation of having coals of fire heaped upon your head, the favors he so generously signifies his willingness to grant you, in case of need."

Observing the only too apparent sneer and malignant tone that accompanied these words of his, God knows it was all that I could do to contain myself until he had ceased, in the hope of getting the key

to the riddle of her disdainful treatment of him, if not an understanding of what he was driving at. In the very outset my hand had sought and gripped the hilt of my sword, and the instant that the last sneering word had left his vile lips my blade flashed in his face. I commanded him to take back his words and to apologize to Miss Orandal, or else draw and defend himself, as I meant to run him through as I would the dirtiest redskin that ever lurked in ambush. And whatever else he was, or might have been, he was no coward, and ere the Governor, Mr. Penn, or others immediately present had recovered from their surprise sufficiently to interfere, if indeed the thought of doing so occurred to any of them, our blades had crossed and were in rapid play, insomuch that the clash of steel upon steel was already ringing through the great oblong room, and in a way that set all the boys in our direction, and all the maids in another, screaming.

I had always been reckoned a rapid and expert fencer, but in this I seemed not to have one whit the better of my antagonist, whose suppleness, agility, quickness of eye, and unusual alertness I soon found myself sorely put to to equal. In the matter of coolness and wind, however, I soon perceived that I had a decided advantage, and felt that I need only bide my time and strike the decisive blow. This opportunity came sooner than I had hoped. In his eagerness to make what he meant should prove a sure thrust, he left an opening, quick to see and take

advantage of which, I drove the point of my sword under his guard and wrenched his from his hand and sent it flying across the room, thus leaving him utterly at my mercy, had I been coward enough to avail myself of his defenseless condition, as I felt quite sure he would have done, had the case been reversed, so lacking did I then believe him to be in that sense of honor that restrains men of the right mettle under such circumstances.

CHAPTER V

All this had happened so quickly and progressed so rapidly that no one had sufficiently recovered from the surprise, into which all had been thrown, to attempt an interference. But now that I had disarmed him in the manner mentioned, my friend, Roland Wadsworth, and Jephtha Allenberry quickly placed themselves between us to prevent a possible renewal of the combat, while my fiancée, who till now had stood like one transfixed with the horror of the possibility of downright tragedy, rushed forward and murmured her congratulations and thankfulness for my success and safety.

I fully expected that he would immediately challenge me to a renewal of the impromptu duel at some more suitable time and place, and stood ready to accept, if he did. But, for some cause, possibly through the advice of Sir William Penn, who had immediately taken charge of him, he did not, and the affair seemed ended.

Thereupon Mr. Penn delivered himself of a somewhat laughable apology to the Governor and Mrs. Treat for the untoward occurrences that had resulted from his and Lieutenant Highland's unexpected advent. Very soon thereafter he and my late an-

tagonist made their departure, though not before Miss Crandal, whose sentiments concerning the Taunton outrage had undergone a decided change after she had heard the Quaker's side of the case, had made a suitable, consistent, and perfectly ladylike apology to him, the nature of which I do not deem it necessary to encumber this narrative with.

And notwithstanding what I had seen and heard at the ball, I was just as much in the dark when we reached home that night a little after midnight as to the nature of the matter between Miss Crandal and Lieutenant Highland as if I had never seen nor heard anything whatever. For, although I had more than once asked her to enlighten me during our walk toward home, she had seemed reluctant to do so, possibly on account of the presence of my sister Jocelyn and Roland Wadsworth (whose attention to my sister of late had given her family and others the impression that his regard for her was something far stronger than mere friendship), saying that her father and mother should acquaint me with all the particulars the first thing on the morrow. And with this I had to be content.

It was at the breakfast table next morning that Captain Crandal and Mrs. Crandal, after being informed of the unexpected meeting with Lieutenant Highland the night before and the other events that had followed it, gave me the key to the riddle that had so mystified me ever since the evening before. According to what they said, it chanced that their

daughter had been so unfortunate as to have become the object of the love of this handsome, but profligate, protégé of his Excellency, Sir Edmund Andros. And although steadfastly and repeatedly repulsed in as gentle and ladylike manner as her natural aversion toward him and the circumstances at the moment would allow, he nevertheless persisted in his attempts to court her, all to her great annoyance and downright humiliation, her pure, unsullied nature revolting at the mere thought of receiving from such as he even the customary devoirs due from man to woman, much less listening to his protestations of love and his entreaties for her hand in wedlock.

Then, after a time, finding himself unable to make any headway, then forbidden the house, and later repulsed in the most positive and upbraided in the most scathing manner consistent with a nature so gentle and refined, when he would have forced his attentions upon her in a chance meeting upon the street in Boston, he had, as a last resort, laid the matter before his patron, Sir Edmund Andros, and invoked the power and influence supposed to attach to the high position of Governor General to enforce his suit.

And that worthy, it seems, fell right in with the plan, insomuch that he lost no time in summoning Captain Crandal into his presence and in demanding of him his daughter's reasons for rejecting the suit of his favorite, upon whose excellent lineage he dilated without stint, whose virtues he extolled without

measure, and whose worldly prospects he took great pains to impress upon him.

Feeling his sensibilities outraged and his daughter degraded by this unseemly presumption on the part of his Excellency, Captain Crandal was quick to resent it. He assured his Excellency that notwithstanding his protégé's ancestry might be all that he claimed and his prospects beyond the wildest dreams of avarice, yet his character was despicable and his disposition so utterly degenerate that he would rather see his daughter burned at the stake, or flayed alive, than that she should ever become the wife of such as he.

At this answer and unstinted arraignment of his protégé his Excellency became so inflated with rage that he was like to explode, according to Captain Crandal's account of the interview. Leaping to his feet, he strode up to him and, shaking his finger in his face, hissed out: "Beware, Captain Crandal, what you say! You forget, sir, the kind of blood you are traducing. His father was not only of noble birth, sir, but his was a noble nature as well, and therefore no son of his could be the base, despicable thing that you charge Lieutenant Highland with being.

"Back to your home, sir, and reconsider your words and reconcile yourself to, and make your daughter accept, his suit, or you may regret it all by seeing her suffer some such direful death as you outlined in preference to her being his bride. For there are

still savages that delight in victims for the stake and witches so diabolical that flaying alive is too merciful a punishment. A hint to the wise should be all sufficient, sir, and surely you are wise enough to take it."

A hint? God knows it was no mere hint that Captain Crandal had received, but a threat as big and as broad as words could make it.

Confronted with such dreadful conditions, yet backed up by the determination not to accept them, even though nothing else might avert the threatened penalty if he remained there in Boston, it was no wonder that Captain Crandal lost no time in leaving there clandestinely with his family and such personal belongings and household goods as they could conveniently carry in their boat. The wonder is that he did not seek refuge in some more remote and less accessible place than Hartford.

After these revelations it was easy enough to understand the cause of Lieutenant Highland's bitterness and the significance of his allusion to the rumor of witchcraft in connection with Miss Crandal's name. And, knowing well the foolish superstition that prevailed throughout all New England concerning the like, I shuddered at the thought of the evil consequences that might result to her from a rumor fanned as I felt sure that Lieutenant Highland would cause it to be fanned and agitated. Already, I felt quite sure, his devilish machinations were at work circulating things calculated to give rise to suspicion, if



not formulating a plan to fasten upon her the stigma of witchcraft, after which conviction under the trumped up charge would be an easy matter at that time of rank fanaticism and foolish superstition, when even a half grounded suspicion was almost equal to a death sentence.

The mere thought of being haled before a tribunal upon such a charge, howsoever weak and trivial the proof might be, was distressing enough, God knows. But when one took into account the fatal temper of the people at this time about witchcraft and particularly the unfriendly bias of the tribunals (dominated as they were by the ministers and other religious fanatics) that had jurisdiction in such matters, the contemplation was anything but reassuring, if it did not inspire visions of the utterly tragic. To the perturbed state of mind to which these revelations and what I had seen and heard at the ball the night before had brought me was now added the distress caused by a message from Captain Wadsworth that I would have to go at once with the trainband, of which I was first lieutenant, in pursuit of the redskins, who, it had just been made known, had invaded the neighborhood the night before and captured and carried away two young ladies, who it was feared would suffer torture and death at the stake unless speedily rescued.

Always before a summons to go in pursuit of, or to meet, any of these red devils in such conflict as their skulking, desultory mode of warfare made possible,

had been hailed by me with a warmth and degree of enthusiasm that it was hard for those not inured to the like to understand or appreciate. But the deep solicitude that had come into my heart for the welfare of my fiancée had changed all this, and I would fain have got out of going on this expedition had there been any escape short of playing some unworthy part to avoid it.

CHAPTER VI

It is probable that if I had gone to Captain Wadsworth and made known to him the nature of the relationship now existing between Miss Crandal and myself, at the same time acquainting him with what Captain Crandal had just revealed to me and the danger that I felt threatened her through the machinations of Lieutenant Highland, secretly aided and abetted by his unscrupulous patron, Sir Edmund, he would have excused me from service on that occasion, especially as I knew that he entertained for the Governor General nothing but the most bitter feelings.

But that sense of reluctance peculiar to such as have not yet been able to overcome their youthful dread of discussing the affairs of the heart with their elders, together with the fear that he would consider my apprehensions mere exaggerations of the solicitude that such tender sentiments always entails, restrained me. Therefore, as there seemed nothing for me to do but comply with the call, and as the other members of the trainband were already hurrying toward the large, square, log building that served as a rallying point, I lost no more time in vain speculation as to how I might honorably avoid going on that expedition. And I betook myself there speedily, albeit somewhat reluctantly.

And what think you were my sensations, upon arriving at the rendezvous, at beholding first of all the now utterly despised Lieutenant Highland? Not only so, but he was seemingly as much concerned about the welfare of the captives and for the speedy start of the trainband upon their two-fold mission of rescue and revenge as any of those whose duty and pleasure it was to go, yet having not the slightest intention of participating in the expedition himself, judging from the line of pursuit he was graciously suggesting to Captain Wadsworth, who gave it no heed, however. Instinctively I felt that he did not experience one iota of the concern that he manifested for the speedy departure of the trainmen upon their mission, and that although his suggestions on their face were calculated to facilitate, in reality they were intended to retard and frustrate the rescue, if possible. Accompanying these convictions was the suspicion that he was in some way responsible for the capture of the two young women and the pending expedition.

For I could readily divine from what I had seen and heard about him that he was as crafty as he was unscrupulous, and would balk at nothing that gave promise of bringing him a point or two nearer some much desired end, be it love or be it hate that prompted him to the undertaking. This suspicion led me to the conviction that he had connived at the capture of the two young ladies for no other purpose than to get the trainband out of the way so that

another band of savages (even then, perhaps, lurking in the woods nearby) might surprise the town after nightfall and capture and carry away my fiancée and later place her at his mercy, to be dealt with according to the dictates of his unscrupulous heart.

When I had fully made up my mind to this effect, it occurred to me that I ought to go at once and tell my suspicions to Captain Wadsworth. But, foreseeing that to give them anything like plausibility and a reasonable excuse for my solicitude it would be necessary to go over everything from the Boston episode down to the present, including my love for, and betrothment to, Miss Crandal, I hesitated, especially as I feared he would laugh at me and compare my anxiety to the solicitude of one made suddenly foolish by the possession of a love so precious in his eyes that he must needs try to safeguard it against even the barest possibilities. And albeit I liked not the idea of such a contingency, I nevertheless cast my diffidence aside and confided in him, and it chanced as I had feared that it would. For he not only laughed at my fears, but actually grew facetious at my expense. Nor would he listen for a moment to my urgent suggestion to the effect that, after we had gone a little ways from town, I be allowed to detach a certain number from the company and conceal myself with them until after nightfall and await results, ready to pounce upon the savages and frustrate their design, should my suspicions prove correct, as I felt sure they would.

Naturally, I felt somewhat aggrieved at the humorous view that Captain Wadsworth had taken of my anxiety and at the blunt way that he had set my suggestions at naught. And, but for that sense of deference due from a subordinate officer to his superior in rank, and more especially because of a sense of that reverence due from youth to age, I would have resented it. As it was, however, I swallowed my resentment along with my chagrin at having been so foolish as to confide in him, yet could not banish my fears nor overcome my anxiety while plodding along at the head of my company over the trail that we soon struck in the wilderness, and that would lead us we knew not whither, nor into what, ere the quest came to an end in some wise—in death, perhaps, to some, and in sorrow, deep and abiding maybe, to others. For the hazards of war, like those of love, are uncertain, God knows.

At this point I beg to say, by way of excusing myself to such of my readers as may chance to find fault with this narrative on account of what they may regard as a lack of detail, that it has been my aim thus far and is my purpose henceforth to avoid that prolixity peculiar to many writers, and likewise to steer clear of that meagerness of detail and a too rigid adherence to the main thread of the story characteristic of many of the others. For I like not verbosity any more than I fancy the habit that some have of ranging so close to the natural trend of the incidents and scenes constituting the chief substance

of the story as to deprive it of that color and variety that those little side rambles and occasional digressions that a writer here and there has the hardihood to indulge in always imparts to it.

And, notwithstanding the fact that the tendency of the times into which we have fallen is toward brevity, the extreme niggardliness of detail peculiar to some writers has marred many an otherwise fascinating tale, and should be avoided no less than prolixity.

But then, as moralizing was not the purpose of this slight digression, we might better return to the range where we may legitimately browse, and avoid the charge of inconsistency. How hard it is to be perfectly consistent, and to practice what we preach!

CHAPTER VII

We were occupied the better part of two days in our pursuit of the savages. For it was not until the morning of the third day out from Hartford that we fell upon them while in the act of preparing their scanty morning meal on the spot where they had passed the night, near the foot of one of the more prominent in a low, zigzag range of hills about thirty miles northwest of Hartford. The place was a small cove, or indentation in the side of the heavily wooded hill, just below where one of the miniature tributaries of the little nearby mountain stream had its source, amidst a dense tangle of laurel and ivy growth. We had located them shortly after dark the evening before, and had partly surrounded them, then had waited until daylight before falling upon them, so as to make sure of our purpose and of the rescue.

It was a still, clear, starlit night, and so cool that we had much ado to withstand the chill of the frost-laden air. For of course we dared not kindle a fire at that time and place. Three times during the earlier part of the night I observed one of the savages raise himself cautiously onto his elbow, and remain thus in what seemed a listening attitude until called down

by another of the savages, who appeared to be equally as wakeful as he, and somewhat suspicious of him, judging from the challenging tone of his voice. But of what he might be suspected I could not, of course, then surmise, unless of a design to release the captives and enable them to escape, which was scarcely probable.

The light from their camp-fire in the earlier part of the night showed the captives quietly reposing under a covering of bearskins, near the foot of a large oak, standing a few feet away from where reposed the eight redskins that constituted the number of their captors, so far as might then be determined.

Despite its attendant discomforts, a night in the wilderness had ever been singularly fascinating to me. Lying prone, or reclining upon a bed of leaves or moss, with the moonlight, or starlight, trickling down through the interlacing branches above me, experiencing those semiweird yet strangely pleasant sensations that nothing like the all-pervading silence of a forest at night, broken at short intervals by the voices of the nigh-prowling creatures, can give rise to or yield a partial recompense for, the strenuous incidents or dangers of the day that the impending midnight seals and consigns to the ever lengthening eternity of yesterdays fade away into forgetfulness or take their place with other like driftwood on the current of memory.

But this night was different. Anxiety over that shadowy, indefinable something that I had felt men-

aced my fiancée ever since the revelations I had received the morning before, no less than the growing suspicion that Lieutenant Highland had instigated that which was responsible for the present expedition, the better to further and facilitate his sinister designs against her, filled my mind to the exclusion of almost everything else.

Hence my ears were deaf to the voices of the night-things and my heart unresponsive to any other feeling or emotion as I sat there with my back against a small beech tree, standing but a few paces up the hillside above the camp-fire, about which the savages and their captives reposed, both alike unconscious of our near proximity, my cloak drawn closely about my half chilled body, my war-piece resting conveniently across my lap, waiting patiently for the morning, when we might attack and annihilate the red devils, if possible, and rescue their captives.

To this deep absorption in the anxiety that had beset me for the last two days was undoubtedly due that which had bid fair to terminate my existence, and frustrate the successful accomplishment of our expedition. For hours I had sat there, while all but two others of the trainband slumbered at a safe distance away, my eyes upon the ever diminishing glow of the campfire and the less and less distinct forms of the savages disposed about it, when I became dimly conscious of a slight noise in the leaves on the hillside to the right and slightly above me, and upon turning my head in that direction, my

eyes encountered the glow of two large, intensely bright, hunger-lit, greenish-looking orbs and the indistinct, crouching outlines of a huge panther, evidently in the very act of springing upon me, according to the prevailing tradition about their habit of switching the ground with their tail when preparing to spring upon their intended prey. It had been the play of his tail upon the leaves, no doubt, that had arrested and attracted my attention from the above mentioned, all-absorbing theme.

Apprehending instantly and fully the danger that threatened me, yet realizing it would never do to discharge my piece if it could possibly be avoided, I recalled an expedient I had heard of for frightening such, and quickly taking from my pocket a flint with one hand and my hunting-knife from its sheath with the other, I brought them rapidly together with a friction sufficient to produce a succession of brilliant sparks. This had the desired effect of frightening the huge beast and of causing it to scramble to its feet and slink away into the depths of the forest.

At the first gray streaks of dawn the Indians began to stir, and a little later to prepare their morning meal. Thereupon, at a prearranged signal from Captain Wadsworth, we fell upon and exterminated them all, with one solitary exception, of which more anon.

Before leaving this scene of brief conflict and bloodshed for the return trip to Hartford, Captain Wadsworth instructed me to make a careful exami-

nation of each of the eight bodies stretched at length here and there about the little open space in the cove in the midst of which they had spent the night, and if one should be found with the signs of life in his body to see that he was finished then and there. For it not infrequently happened that an Indian feigned death until after the enemy's departure, and then became as lively and devilish as ever.

Following these orders, I proceeded at once to my task. But in every case the evidences of death were conclusive enough to satisfy the most skeptical, until I came to the very last one where he lay face downward in the edge of the thick growth of ivy and laurel previously alluded to. I remembered to have seen him pitch forward at the very outset of the fusillade that had proved so disastrous to the marauders. He had gone down with his head well in under the foliage of the low, drooping branches of the ivy bushes, whose shelter he had evidently sought and almost gained when overtaken by the leaden missive. I also recalled that even at that critical moment it had occurred to me that he was both young and handsome, and possessed of a manly, martial form, and that I had experienced a twinge of pity that one so favored physically should come to his death in so ignoble a cause as that in which he had been overtaken.

His form, as before indicated, was the last one to which my gruesome mission brought me, and he still lay in the same position apparently into which

his headlong plunge had brought him, one arm under his body, and the other stretched limply forward, palm down. And although he lay prone upon his breast, his head was turned to one side in a way that showed his handsome face in profile, with eyes closed and lips slightly apart. With my foot I pressed the drooping branches of the ivy back, so as to get a better view of his face. Presently it struck me as a singular thing that his eyes should be closed. "It is never so in cases of death in this wise," I mused, "and rarely so under any circumstances," and thereupon I became interested in the idea that he was not dead, but only "'possuming," as the saying is. A feather, which some moulting bird had shed, caught my eye where it swayed on the twig to which it clung, and suggested an experiment. Plucking it from the twig, I stooped down and held it close to his half parted lips, and then watched intently for the motion that I very well knew that even his well suppressed and wholly imperceptible breathing must impart to it, if he still lived, as I half believed he did, and as a clearly perceptible outward movement of the feather instantly indicated.

Then immediately ensued a struggle between that sense of duty that a military order entails and the merciful monitor wherewith I had been endowed, the one urging me immediately to dispatch him and the other admonishing me to forbear, on the grounds that it was nothing less than cold-blooded murder

to strike the finishing blow while he lay thus at my mercy. And, thanks to a natural aversion to the like, conscience won over the sense of military duty, and instead of the death-blow I bent yet nearer, and whispered:

"Owassa (for I had by this time recognized him as the son of Oneca, and therefore grandson of the great Uncas), this is Marc Law. He knows you still live, and are but little hurt. And although he has orders to finish you, yet conscience and a feeling of mercy have unmanned him and made of him a woman in spirit, and he cannot.

"Now in return for thy life, Owassa, grant him this request: Remain where you are until he can manage to slip back here for a little talk with you a little while after our departure. He feels sure that you know something that might help him to frustrate the designs of the one that got you and those other braves into that which has ended so disastrously for them, and had for you likewise, but that mercy restrained his hand. Answer quickly whether you will or not, lest a longer parley here occasions wonder yonder, and draws others hither, in which case your doom is sealed, as you know."

Thereupon he opened his eyes, looked steadily into my own for a moment, and then said: "The son of Oneca will wait by the little stream below us there. He wants water, and his white brother will find him there when he returns."

Thus assured I hastened back to where the com-

pany was ready to begin the return march, knowing that he was certain to keep his word. For, inconsistent and treacherous as they are in many instances, an Indian rarely ever violates his pledged word, especially under circumstances such as those.

We set out immediately for home after I rejoined the trainband, happily, too, without Captain Wadsworth's questioning me as to the result of my investigation, as I had feared he would, and had prepared myself with an answer, if he should.

It will be observed that we had left the fallen savages there upon the ground where our leaden missiles had dropped them, following literally the scriptural injunction of letting the dead bury its dead, whatever, or whoever, this figurative master of the like ceremonies may be, yet knowing that in this instance at least it would be the panther and the wolf, the vulture and other carrion creatures of the air. Alas for the heartlessness of war!

CHAPTER VIII

It was necessary now, of course, for me to find an excuse to return for the appointed interview with the Indian, Owassa. To this end I thought of an expedient, but to avail myself of it without being detected, my position would have to be that of the hindmost man in the file for a little while at least. Then, after we were well under way, I stealthily loosened the rawhide strap that supported my powder-horn and bullet-pouch, and at an opportune moment they slipped from my shoulder and slid to the ground, unperceived by any one, as intended. Presently then, after we had gone something like a quarter of a mile down the little creek along which our trail lay, I pretended to discover my loss, and asked permission of the captain to turn back and recover my powder-horn and pouch.

I found Owassa at the place appointed there by the creek. His injury, as suspected by me, proved to be only a slight one, merely a flesh wound in the right side, just below the armpit. I helped him to wash it with water dipped from the little creek in my hand, and then applied some lintlike stuff, scraped from the inside of mulberry bark from a tree nearby, binding it in place with a strip of cloth torn from my bullet-patching.

Going then at once to the matter in mind, I asked him if I might depend on him to answer me truthfully everything that I should ask him concerning the capture of the two maids, as well as to who was responsible for it. After a short but searching scrutiny of my face, he said: "The son of Oneca has no forked tongue, and would not know how to use it, if he had. Owassa knows he owes his life to his long-knife brother, and will answer truly what his brother may ask him. Through all the moons he may be spared to see his brother's cause shall be Owassa's, his brother's wars Owassa's wars. Only death shall stay Owassa's hand from striking down his brother's foes. Owassa now is done until his brother's will is known."

"Owassa tells his white brother that he has no forked tongue, and that he will answer truly all his brother asks him, and his white brother believes him," I said. "Tell me, then, who induced you and those now dead braves to invade their homes, and carry away the paleface maidens? For well Owassa's brother knows it was the work of some renegade."

"Knows my white brother one about his own age and size, and very handsome, but for the little imps of evil forever chasing one another through the shadowy depths of his ever restless eyes, one whose doublet and hose are the deep, dark hue of the newborn rose, and the lining of whose rich, gold-broidered cloak shows all the colors of the rainbow?"

"Do you mean Lieutenant Highland?" I asked,

the description fitting him exactly, both as to person and apparel.

"The son of Oneca knows not his name, nor if his rank be that or not. Owassa knows only that one such came with soft words, fair speech, and a jug of fire-water, and promises of much of the white man's wampum, and the Pequod and Narragansett dogs, now taking their last sleep in the cove up yonder, undertook to do his dirty bidding. As for Owassa, he turned a deaf ear to his soft speech, rejected his fire-water, and spurned his wampum," he answered with decision and dignity.

"Then, if Owassa was proof against his persuasions, his tender of fire-water, and spurned his bribe, how was it he chanced to be with the marauders this morning?" I asked, puzzled to account for his presence there, after such a declaration.

"As the son of Oneca had not time to warn his long-knife brothers until it would be too late, he decided the next best thing was to join the Pequods and Narragansetts after they had started upon their dog's mission, that he might protect the maids against insult and injury until there came an opportunity to help them to escape and find their way back to their people. Thrice last night Owassa lifted himself cautiously from his couch with this purpose in view, but one of the Pequod dogs was awake each time, and seemed to suspect something," he answered, as he stooped and scooped up a handful of water from the

rivulet and dashed it on the wound, which was evidently smarting and paining him considerably.

"That was noble and kind of you, Owassa," I replied warmly, "and all your long-knife brothers shall hear about it, and your kindness shall be remembered. But I shudder to think how near you came to losing your life in pursuing your purpose of shielding and befriending the paleface maids."

To these encomiums and expressions of gratitude he vouchsafed no other reply than the grunt peculiar to the Indian, to whom, as a rule, anything like praise or commendation is distasteful. Then, seeing he remained silent, yet feeling he could impart still more information, I asked him what object the renegade had in having the two maids carried away, and he said:

"The son of Oneca knows not, except from the lips of the Pequods and Narragansetts, who said it was to get the long-knife braves away in pursuit, so that another band of Indians could descend upon Hartford and carry off some newcomer and his daughter, whom they were to convey by a roundabout way to the Little Falls of the Shepaug, where the two bands were to meet to-day."

At this disclosure I groaned in very agony, not doubting in the least that the two that they had been incited to carry off were Captain Crandal and his daughter. And,—realizing that it was too late to overtake them now, even though we were back in Hartford at that moment, and much less after we

should be able to reach there from our present location, which could not be effected before some time on the morrow, by which time they would have the better part of three days the start of us, if their nefarious scheme had been carried out on the night succeeding our departure, as intended, according to the understanding of those who had told Owassa,—I felt that my best chance of rescuing my beloved and her father offered itself through an effort to intercept them at the place appointed for the meeting of the two bands at the falls of the Shepaug.

Therefore I determined to hasten back to where the trainmen now awaited me, make a clean breast of my duplicity and its result, and then urge upon Captain Wadsworth the advisability of taking the better part of the company and making our way to the place indicated on the Shepaug, where it was probable we should be so fortunate as to intercept them, if their plans had not miscarried.

How very just had been my suspicions and accurate my line of reasoning, and how much heartache and wearing suspense might have been averted, if Captain Wadsworth had heeded instead of making light of my fears, or seen something less amusing than alarming, it was now useless to recall and mentally rehearse when action would much better serve the purpose. Therefore I turned to Owassa and asked if he knew the way to the Little Falls of the Shepaug, and he replied: "Owassa both knows the way and will guide his white brother and the other

paleface braves thither." This he said very soberly and with that air of dignity characteristic of the Indian.

Hence again for the second time within an hour I arranged with Owassa to await me there, and hastened back to my company, coming near, in my precipitate haste, forgetting to recover my powder-horn and bullet-pouch, which I had not taken the time to pick up on my way there to keep my appointment with him, so eager had I been to learn what I intuitively felt that he knew.

The trainmen were already beginning to show some impatience at my prolonged absence, and stood ready to chide me therefor upon my return, yet were deterred by their anxiety to ascertain the reason for my evident haste to reach them and the only too apparent excitement under which I labored.

You may be sure I lost no time in acquainting them with what my bit of duplicity (now openly acknowledged in the presence of all) had resulted in, for which I was justified even in the estimation of Captain Wadsworth himself, who hastened to assure me how much he regretted that he had not paid serious attention to my previously expressed apprehensions.

CHAPTER IX

There lived in Hartford during the period covered by the memories embraced in this narrative one of those diversified, many-sided characters, which happen at long intervals of not more than one in a century—a man who was, alternately, the wit and the butt, the sage and the clown, of the borough, yet withal the favorite of every man, woman, and child in it or adjacent thereto. He was likewise by turns the most ungainly and the most perfect pattern of physical manhood to be seen thereabouts, and also by turns the most frivolous and the most dignified man of whom it is possible to conceive, howsoever paradoxical this may seem.

Again, and this I came near overlooking in the enumeration of his parts, he was not infrequently the servant, so to speak, of this one and that, but always of his own free and voluntary will, when the necessity, precipitated by some untoward circumstance, made such service a godsend to the recipient, and just as often he was the master and absolute dictator in sudden emergencies, at which time the people vied with one another in doing his bidding.

As an instance of this masterfulness of his, let us take the occasion when Mrs. O'Meary's little Pat and

his still smaller sister wandered down to the river and climbed on to a scarcely more than toy-raft, which they found moored there, and which immediately slipped its insecure fastenings and drifted out into the swift current, now racing at flood speed down toward the storm-tossed waters of the sound, while the people of the borough went running up and down, and hither and thither, well-nigh beside themselves with the horrible apprehensions such a dangerous predicament would naturally give rise to, with not a boat nor any species of water craft in reach at the moment with which a rescue might be effected, and the river at too high a flood stage, and too full of drifting ice, for any one to risk his life in trying to swim to them and recover them from the frail raft and danger of drowning.

At this critical stage of the dilemma into which they were all come as one man, yet the whole of them having not so much wit or presence of mind as one ordinarily would have had, Jephtha Allenberry (which was the name of this man of many personalities and divers rôles) suddenly appeared upon the scene and, taking in at a glance the situation and danger of the children, he instantly thought of a means that, if put into immediate execution, would result in their rescue.

Straightening himself to the full height of his six-foot-two, and discarding the grimace characteristic of his countenance during one of his lapses into the rôle of harlequin, which chanced to be the form of

expression that he wore at the moment of his appearance, his face took on the air of grim purpose and determination of a great general come front to front with a crisis in battle, and he gave orders, to the instant execution of which all hands went, even to Governor Treat, Captain Wadsworth, and others of note and high repute in the community, with as much alacrity as if some direful penalty awaited their non-compliance. And when—But then this incident in no wise appertains to these memoirs, yet, in my eagerness to substantiate one of my claims about this singular character, I was like to incorporate it, notwithstanding.

In the hope of recovering as speedily as possible, if at all, these latest victims of Lieutenant Highland's machinations, and thereby rectifying in some measure his mistake in turning a humorous rather than a serious ear to the apprehensions that I had with great confidence in his just consideration of them made known to him, Captain Wadsworth readily and graciously assented to my plan of proceeding at once from there to the Little Falls of the Shepaug, with the idea of intercepting them there.

The question then came up as to how many men it would be advisable to take with me upon this expedition, and we were still discussing the matter when our ears were suddenly beset with the sound of a masculine voice at some little distance down the creek, lifted high in sentimental melody, as if the singer wist not the danger of drawing upon his trail

some beast of prey or vengeful savage lurking there amidst the impenetrable shadows of the densely wooded wilderness about him.

The love ditty he caroled, with a well accentuated quaver, was one that had lately been wafted over the seas and that had found many votaries amongst the colonists. The words of it, however, I am unable to transcribe for the benefit of the reader, owing to the poor memory that I have of the like. For, having not the gift of melody, it has never stood me in need to make mental store of such.

"If my ears play me no trick," observed Captain Wadsworth, "that is none other than Jeptha Allenberry, coming in quest of us, doubtless with tidings of that which we have just learned." And so thought we all, yet must needs wait for his appearance to make sure whether it was he or not.

Meanwhile his nearer approach was manifested by the ever increasing distinctness of the melody he voiced, with the well affected love-sick quaver we had at first distinguished.

Presently a form appeared round a curve in the dim trail, less than an arrow's flight from where we were, and it required no more than a casual glance to assure us that we had not guessed amiss. For whosoever had once beheld him in his rôle of the lubberly slouch, which was the one he affected now, and the one most deplored by his friends, who liked best to see him wearing the mien and dignity of the leader he was meant to be, and would have been but for

those lapses and outlandish transformations previously alluded to, had no cause to question his identity in this instance.

He had come to Hartford more than three years before from Jamestown, in the province of Virginia, and in some way it came to be whispered about that he had been a party to a love romance, the climax of which had been a serious break between him and his lady-love, which had resulted in his thus absenting himself from her and the old familiar scenes.

Moreover, there had been another rumor to the effect that, prior thereto, he had been noted for his excessive courtliness of manner and the dignity with which he carried himself, with never a hint of those latent characteristics that had distinguished him ever since his appearance in Hartford, though I can neither affirm nor gainsay either the one or the other of these rumors. I only know that while he had gained the esteem and good-will of all the more eligible belles in and about Hartford, he never paid court to, nor sought the company of, one more than another.

He had not seen us apparently as soon as we had perceived him, nor until some moments later. And when he did at last catch sight of us it in no wise acted to subdue but rather to swell the strains he voiced to a pitch that served to arouse the sleeping echoes of the deep-wooded silence around him, as they had never been awakened before. He carried his piece across the hollow of his left arm, with the

breech well in hand, according to the habit of the times, ready for any chance surprise or justifiable excuse for using it.

Having concluded his love-ditty by the time he reached us, he stooped and placed his flint-lock carefully upon the ground. Then, without a word or any more ado than his droll manner indicated, he executed a complete somersault, with a nimbleness and dexterity that, from one of his height and corresponding proportions, seemed scarcely less than marvelous even to such as had seen him cut other difficult antics.

Thereupon, straightening himself to his full height, and giving a very good imitation of a military salute, he said:

"Captain Wadsworth, and all ye of the trainband, I pray you will pardon as fully and graciously as you can that little exhibition of exuberant joy. For I was so overcome at the unexpected sight of you here in this place that I could neither suppress the flow of melody that the unusual silence and consequent loneliness of these woods inspired, nor speak after it had run itself out. Therefore I was under the necessity of cutting some sort of a caper to rid myself in some degree of the emotion that the unexpected sight of you had given rise to, and perchance regain the faculty of speech it had deprived me of."

Then dubiously, and with a well simulated show of awe and trepidation, he went on, timorously:

"Nor am I sure now I am not confronted by

spirits merely, since my friends in the flesh would surely have spoken to me, or vouchsafed me some manner of welcome ere this!"

Thereupon we all laughed uproariously, less at his droll words, however, than at his manner, which was that of such well feigned perturbation that it was scarcely possible to doubt its reality, or that he was not on the point of precipitate flight. Nor had he in any very great degree overdrawn the facts about our ghostlike silence and consequent lack of welcome. For although well accustomed to his monkey-shines, we had nevertheless been so wholly unprepared for the caper to which he treated us that we had been unable to recover from it to the extent of moving or speaking ere his droll speech and simulated fear broke the spell, and permitted us to greet him with laughter and a handshake, the heartiness and goodwill of which he had no cause to doubt.

"And now that I find that you and your gallant trainmen still exist in the flesh, Captain Wadsworth," he presently went on, "I trust I find you hide-whole and equal to a hurried march. For it behooves you to make all haste back to Hartford, where you will find a state of affairs and a degree of excitement akin to nothing that has stirred the good people of that borough for lo, these many, many moons, reckoning time by the calendar of the red devils that brought us into our present condition of concern and extreme solicitude.

"In short, Captain Wadsworth, to come to the

point without further beating about the bush, at midnight, or thereabouts, of the night succeeding your departure upon this expedition, a band of savages stole into our town in the most silent manner, and captured and carried away three of our people, to wit: Captain Crandal and his daughter, Helen Elizabeth, and Lieutenant Law's sister, Miss Jocelyn. Wherefore you can see the necessity for your immediate and hasty return thither."

It is already known to the reader that I was well prepared to hear that Captain Crandal and my fiancée had been carried away, but that my sister had been taken also was a decided shock to me, and the tidings rendered me well-nigh speechless for the time being. Nor had I fully recovered from the surprise when my friend, Roland Wadsworth, touched me on the arm and said: "Come, Marc, we must be off at once, and try to intercept them. For I shall now make one of the avengers of this second outrage, and woe be to the redskin or renegade in rifle range of whom I shall come!"

And within twenty minutes I, with twenty picked men, was on my way back to the place where I had left Owassa, on whom I depended to guide us to the point on the Shepaug previously mentioned. And in addition to the twenty picked men, Jephtha Allenberry, at his own earnest request, went along. And thereby hangs an interesting feature or two of this expedition.

CHAPTER X

Within a very few minutes after detaching ourselves from Captain Wadsworth and the few left to him, who consisted mainly of the elderly members of the company, with the recovered captives in charge, we were at the place where Owassa awaited us, and from where, without a moment's parley or delay, we set out toward the Little Falls of the Shepaug, whither I besought Owassa to lead us with all possible haste, in respect to which we had no cause to complain, since he advanced at a rate of speed that gave us much ado to keep pace with him.

Our course now, as directed by him, was due west, whereas on the original expedition it had been north-westward. The way by which he led us was the unbroken, trackless wilderness, and therefore much beset with fallen timber, interlacing vines, tangles of brambles, and other like hindrances to progress. Notwithstanding this, however, we had no cause to complain of the time we made and the miles we had traversed when our appetites admonished us it was well within the noon hour, albeit our shins bore many evidences of the vicious tendency of the brambles and other impediments that we had overcome in our eagerness to reach as quickly as possible the ob-

jective point of our present adventure. For there is no stimulant so powerful as the thirst for revenge, and nothing that will urge men on to greater exertion, or acts of more heroic and intrepid daring. This may not speak well for our humanity, but it is in keeping with human nature, nevertheless, and that is what counts far more in cases of such outrages as we were seeking to avenge.

Meanwhile, as we proceeded our spirits, particularly Roland Wadsworth's (whose love for my sister had now become only too apparent) and my own, were saved from descending into the lowermost depths by the scarcely more than audible humorous sallies and occasional downright ludicrous allusions by Jephtha to this one and that one of our band, if not by some quiet but effective monkey trick, which, though seemingly out of place, and therefore inappropriate under the circumstances, was nevertheless the very thing we needed, serving both as a savour and a sauce to our relish for the trying hardships of the hurried march, and incidentally whetting our appetites for the feast of revenge toward which we hastened.

A little thing that occurred on the way I deem worthy of note in this connection, albeit the same has no bearing on this narrative other than as it served to bring us to the conclusion that Providence was not without regard for our physical sustenance, if not for the ultimate success of our present mission, seeing the rations with which we had provided ourselves for the shorter expedition were not likely to

prove sufficient for this additional one upon which we were bent.

At the behest of fatigue less than by the promptings of hunger we had halted for a short space of time by a small spring at the foot of a rocky, sparsely timbered hill, and, upon glancing upward, were not a little surprised, and were correspondingly rejoiced, at perceiving a small herd of deer browsing on the hardy ferns and other still green plants growing amidst the rocks, which our comparatively noiseless approach and arrival to the windward of them had failed to attract, despite their well known and clever alertness. And knowing the low ebb to which our provisions were sure to descend before we could possibly return to Hartford, they were no more than sighted than three or four of the longer range pieces were brought to bear on as many deer, and in another moment would have sent their laden missives upon their mission, and their reverberations hurtling across the wilds, had not Owassa, quickest of any of us to apprehend the probable consequences of such thoughtlessness, restrained them by a low, deprecatory exclamation, indicating, meanwhile, by a sign to the long cedar bow he carried pouch-wise across his shoulder, in addition to the war-piece with which I had supplied him, that he would secure in silence and without harmful consequences what they would have tried for at great hazard to the success of our expedition.

Then, selecting with much care an arrow from his

quiver, he dropped to his hands and knees and made his way cautiously to a large rock, some yards nearer to the desired game, and drew down upon a fine buck and sent the barb true and deep into its side, just behind the left shoulder, dropping it in its tracks all so silently that, but for its pitiful cry at the poignancy of the death thrust, not even its companions would have become aware of our presence thereby. Then within but little more time than it has taken me to narrate the incident, we had it dressed and parceled out among us.

Having become somewhat refreshed by our short stop and a sparing repast from the scanty remains of our rations, we now proceeded on our way, our course carrying us up and across the above mentioned sparsely timbered, rocky hill, which we ascended cautiously to well-nigh the top, where a temporary halt was made while Owassa went forward to reconnoiter. For, according to his reckoning, we were now within less than two miles of the place appointed for the junction of the two bands, and hence we must needs exercise prudence, and take every precaution against even the most remote contingencies, lest we discover ourselves to them and thus thwart the purpose upon which we were bent.

What we particularly feared at this critical juncture was that they might reach the appointed place before we should be able to do so, and then, not finding the other band there, as their twenty-four hours' start should have enabled them to be, they would be-

come anxious and send out two or three of their number to ascertain if possible what was detaining them, and thereby discover our approach and so be enabled to make their escape.

In a few moments Owassa beckoned us forward, and the advance was resumed in a yet more silent and cautious manner even than had characterized it before, owing to the fact that Jephtha Allenberry managed to suppress his propensity to jest, or excite any more of his droll didoes, less out of deference to the hazard the like might have entailed at that stage of the game possibly than to the fact that his heart had become suddenly inflamed with a desire for vengeance on the miscreants. This made of him, for the time being at least, a very sober and discreet adjunct to our little band.

From the top of this hill we immediately began a slow and cautious descent of the western slope, which after a bit brought us to a large ravine running southward at its base. Crossing this branch, and then traversing the narrow, densely wooded valley that lay between it and the next hill, we commenced the ascent of it in the same prudent and cautious manner that we had fallen into on leaving the little spring on the other side of the preceding hill, Owassa well in the lead, upon whom I kept an eye at all times in expectation of receiving from him at any moment some sign or other by which our movements were to be governed, a precaution that, as it turned out, stood us well in hand. For he had scarcely more

than gained the crest of the hill than he dropped suddenly to the ground, and then turning upon his hands and knees descended thus until sufficiently below the top not to be seen by any one on the other side, when he rose to his feet and hastened back with the news that he had seen two Pequods slowly climbing the opposite slope, whose course, if not deviated from in a way to bring them southward, would carry them across north of us.

Here then was evidence conclusive that the band that we had hoped to beat to the Little Falls of the Shepaug had in reality preceded us thither, and the two Pequods Owassa had espied had been sent out to ascertain if possible why the other band had not yet come.

CHAPTER XI

This discovery had left us in a pretty pickle. A hurried consultation was held to determine the best course to pursue in regard to the two Indians discovered toiling upward on the other side of the hill, in a course which was likely to bring them near enough to discover us, give an alarm, and enable their companions to escape before we should be able to effect our purpose.

It was quickly agreed that the best thing would be to get possession of the two, provided this could be done without alarming the others, now so near that the noise of firearms would undoubtedly reach them. Hence an effort to capture and put them to death quietly was the best thing to be done, and to this end we fell back down the hill to the narrow valley that we had just left. There I stationed my men in such a way that, should their course bring them within the semicircle thus formed, as Owassa felt sure it would, we should have little trouble in surrounding and closing in on them, with small chance of discovery in the meantime, since each man was well concealed behind trees amidst the dense undergrowth, to which much of the sear, dead foliage still clung.

Then, with Owassa stationed well in advance, be-

hind a big oak tree, ready with his bow, silently to wing one of them, we felt reasonably sure of our prey. Nor had we long to wait ere we saw them slowly descending the hill directly toward us, and seemingly into the trap that we had set for them. And it was just here that intervened one of those unlooked-for occurrences that not infrequently frustrate or bring to naught the best laid plans, though whether by the will of Providence, or through the machinations of the Evil One, it were no easy matter for any but those directly affected to say. From our standpoint it was the devil, of course, that perpetrated the trick that upset our calculations, while from theirs it was the Good Spirit, who had intervened to save them.

This interruption came in the shape of a half-grown bear, making its way obliquely up the hill from northeast to southwest, perceiving which, at almost the same moment that it caught sight of them and veered its course in a way that sent it off helter-skelter at an angle that carried it directly across our trail, they made haste to follow it, and so discovered the sign of our presence. Thereupon, seeming to divine the trap set for them, they immediately fled back up the hill, thus leaving us no choice but to pursue them as fast as possible in the hope of overtaking and ending them silently, or, failing in that, of keeping so close upon their heels that they would have no time to warn their confederates before we should be upon them at the place of rendezvous.

In the beginning of the chase it was a contest as to who should be first at the heels of our would-be prey, but, as in all cases of a like test, it was a good pair of lungs and a sure, rather than a swift, foot that gave the advantage to one over another. Owassa and Jephtha Allenberry quickly gave evidence of being the better equipped in this respect, and excelled to the extent that they were several yards ahead of the best of us, and not over a dozen strides behind the fugitives as they passed over the crest of the hill, with Roland Wadsworth and the chronicler leading the balance of the trainmen, which reference to himself the chronicler begs the reader will not impute to egotism, nor to a desire to exalt himself above others, but accept as one of those insignificant facts that it is customary to record along with divers other things of minor importance, by way of detail.

The western slope of the hill down which the two Indians had fled was very steep and rough, and therefore entailed many contingencies in the way of mishaps and casualties, both to the pursued and to the pursuers. Nevertheless, the fear that impelled the one and the anxiety that urged the other blinded both alike to the possibilities, insomuch that neither sought to abate the speed that the ever increasing momentum, resulting from the precipitous descent, imparted to their feet. Hence, as a consequence of this heedless impetuosity, the larger of the two fleeing Indians chanced either to plunge his foot into a cavity covered with dead leaves, or to strike it

against a projecting stone, or slightly elevated root, with such force and abruptness that it resulted in his pitching headlong down the hill with such violence that he was stunned and unable to rise before Jephtha and Owassa were upon him, and the latter finished him with his knife.

Meanwhile Roland and I sped on in hot pursuit of the other one, equally heedless of the consequences of such precipitate haste down a course abounding with little pitfalls and other impediments to sure footing, yet happily without mishap of any kind. Yet fast and furious as our pace was, I very soon perceived that the Indian's was even faster, and that he was therefore momentarily gaining ground and widening the distance between himself and us. And albeit we might easily have brought him down with a bullet from one of our pieces, we dared not risk a report at this critical moment.

Presently he gained the bench nearest the foot of the hill where, instead of continuing straight ahead on his course and crossing it, he turned suddenly to the left and fled southward along this comparatively level stretch, as if he had abandoned the idea of trying to reach his companions who, if at the Falls, were due west from where he had veered to the south, and could not now be reached by him without something of a detour, the accomplishment of which would require time. Hence we might easily get there ahead of him by pressing straight for that place at once. Wherefore we gave over the pursuit of the

fugitive, now apparently heeling it in a contrary direction, in the hope and full expectation of immediately surprising and falling upon the rest of his companions at the appointed rendezvous, and of rescuing our loved ones.

To this end we waited the few seconds necessary to enable the remainder of the trainmen to catch up, and then pressed on toward the Falls with a mind to all the precautions necessary to such an undertaking, Owassa as usual in advance, ready to check us by a sign when the time should come for a halt to arrange our plans for the attack. For we had not the slightest idea but we should find them there. Then presently he stopped and beckoned us forward, and when we came up with him we perceived an expression upon his usually inexpressive face that puzzled us. But we were not long in learning the cause of it. There was no sign of any one at the Falls.

CHAPTER XII

Thus in a moment is a dream or a hope dissipated, the realization of a well grounded expectation thwarted. For we had never doubted, after the discovery of the two Indians, that we should find them there. And in addition to the deep disappointment that we each and all experienced, Roland and I most of all naturally, we found ourselves face to face with a serious dilemma. For the course to pursue, promising the surest chance of overhauling them, was a most puzzling problem. They might now, for all we knew, be miles away in some other direction, and the probability of such a thing gave cause for any but encouraging reflections, insomuch that our spirits descended to a level from which there appeared no immediate prospect of their regaining an elevation from which we might look ahead with anything like a reasonable degree of satisfaction.

Hence for the time being I felt myself wholly unequal to the task before me, and I heartily wished that Captain Wadsworth was there to help us out of our quandary. For in all my previous experiences I had never felt myself so helpless and incapable, and I can account for it on no other grounds than that one's personal concern sometimes unmans and

incapacitates him to the extent that he is unable to make even a reasonable effort to extricate himself from his difficulties, by the same token, perhaps, that a physician, howsoever efficient under ordinary circumstances, and well qualified in the case of others, is unable to diagnose his own case and prescribe therefor.

At all events such appeared to be my predicament, when there suddenly came a gleam of hope through a suggestion from Owassa, who, after so briefly informing us that the objects of our quest were not at the Falls, had withdrawn to one side and squatted upon the ground, in the manner peculiar to his kind, where his usually inexpressive countenance assumed the expression of one in deep and earnest cogitation. From this he presently came to his feet with a suddenness that indicated a purpose of some sort, and said:

"The son of Oneca will locate the Pequod dogs, if the two we saw, the scalp of one of whom he now carries, were of the party we seek. For if so, they came first to the Falls to find out whether the others were there, before starting on their mission to ascertain the cause of the delay, and their back tracks will lead to where they separated from the rest of the party and the captives. For no Pequod dog can tread so lightly that Owassa cannot trail him.

"Keep ye under cover here while Owassa tries to find their tracks yonder, and when he beckons you forward, then follow at a safe distance."

With that he was off, and we at once realized that it was the only reasonable solution to the difficulty that confronted us. Nor had we the least doubt that he should be able to follow the trail, in the event that he should find it, as we had reason to believe that he would.

Upon his departure we all pressed forward to the edge of the little open space about the Falls, where we eagerly awaited the sign to follow him, should he be so fortunate as to discover the trail. The sign was not long in coming. For with a perception as true and unerring as the scent of a deerhound upon a perfectly fresh trail, he had found their tracks at the point where they had entered the opening, at the south side, and after a moment or so beckoned us to follow, which we immediately did, of course, mindful meantime of his injunction to keep at a safe distance behind him. Nor did it require any great stretch of the imagination to understand why he had thus admonished us. His innate knowledge of the Indian character and habits had led him to the conclusion that he would find them near that place, and that if we would surprise them we must be cautious and on the alert for the sign from him.

And so we proceeded accordingly, our spirits greatly revived by the prospect that such reflections held out to us. The near approach of night, however, gave us no little concern. For should their present covert be at any very great distance from where Owassa had started upon the back trail of the

two that had evidently come out from them, and had been unexpectedly discovered and chased by us, darkness would put a stop to our progress before we should be able to locate them, and morning would find them gone. For undoubtedly the one that had escaped us would find his way back to them, and would acquaint them with what had occurred, and so enable them to evade us.

This too at unbearable fatigue to the captives, the physical welfare of two of whom at least, scarcely less than my fear that they might be subjected to personal violence of some sort, was a source of worry to me more than to any one else in the band, except Roland Wadsworth, whose devotion to my sister Jocylin was now established beyond all peradventure, thus making the bond between us yet more firm and binding, if such a thing were possible.

This train of unpleasant reflections was presently interrupted, however, by a sign from Owassa, whom we perceived warily retracing his steps toward us, thus indicating that he had made a discovery. In the manner peculiar to his kind he went at once to the point upon meeting us, saying simply: "The son of Oneca traced them to their covert, as he said he would. They are just behind that little knoll yonder, and the Pequod dog that was too swift of foot for my long-knife brothers had just got in and was telling his tale when Owassa discovered them. As soon as they have gorged themselves on the venison they were roasting over their camp-fire, they will

steal away, unless we can manage to surround them before.

"Their way will lead them across the Shepaug and toward the place where the sun goes down. For Owassa crept up close enough to hear that much, and to count them. There are nine Pequods, and one tall, black-haired paleface, dressed and painted to look like a Narragansett. He was trying to caress one of the paleface maids, and when he tried to kiss her she hit him so hard on the nose that she made it bleed, whereupon he cursed her for a dirty wench, at which the long-knife captive tried to tear himself loose from the sapling to which he was bound, as if he would have killed him, and as Owassa would have done but for fear of ruining our prospects of rescuing the prisoners, and destroying him along with the others."

God knows it was all I could do to keep from breaking away and going alone at top speed to that covert, bursting in upon them, and shooting that monster down in his tracks before he had time to realize what was happening. For only too well I knew who was the paleface dressed and disguised to look like a Narragansett. Yet, knowing how much depended on prudence and caution at this critical juncture, I managed to restrain myself, put the trainmen in the order I desired they should move toward the miscreants, and then, led by Owassa, we crept forward with such haste as we dared to attempt under the circumstances.

It had been arranged that Jephtha Allenberry and Roland, with three others, were to make a dash for, and encompass as near as might be, the three captives as soon as the sign was given for the onslaught, while the other seventeen of us would see that none of their captors escaped, if in our power to prevent it.

At the near side of the little knoll referred to by Owassa, we strung out to the right and left, and then while Jephtha and Roland, with the three men, picked to accompany them in their part to protect the captives from any possible attempt of their captors to injure them when they should find that the jig was up with them, crept up to the top of the knoll to be in readiness for the dash the instant the signal was given, we stole round to either end, those on the right led by Owassa, and those on the left led by myself. For some cause, as we soon perceived, they had not been in as great a hurry to get away as had been expected, and were still idly eating when we got round to where we could peer through the underbrush and see them.

Then, after two or three minutes from the time that I and my little squad of seven had secured a position from which we could break easily and quickly, the weird quaver of the screech-owl came from Owassa's side of the knoll. This being the signal for the concerted dash toward them, we were upon them a moment later, dealing death and destruction with all the pent-up anger of our hearts,

and in far less time than I should be able to describe it the thing was done.

I had requested Owassa to make a special effort to make an end of the one disguised as a Narragansett, whom I felt sure was none other than Lieutenant Highland, which, with the purpose I had formed to the like end, would make it next to impossible, I felt, for him to escape with his life. But, through some trick of the devil whom he served with such unabated faithfulness and consistency, that particular miscreant was enabled to elude us and effect his escape, while not one of his miserable tools but fell a prey to our vengeance, and contributed a scalp each to Owassa's belt.

CHAPTER XIII

But for that ever wakeful, ever vigilant something in us designated subconsciousness, many things that are woven into the warp and woof of our lives would utterly escape us in our review of past events. For there are occasions when the action in matters of moment is so fast and furious that our real or normal consciousness is unable to grasp and retain the varied incidents growing out of it, along with the chief and more salient features, particularly those of a trivial or minor nature, which must therefore fail to impress themselves upon even the most sensitive and alert memory but for the vigilance of this subordinate of our true consciousness. To it, doubtless, we are indebted for the phenomena that we call dreams. For, being endowed with eternal wakefulness, it must needs find some means of diversion while we slumber, and hence the pleasurable scenes through which it bears us, or the weird and blood-curdling predicaments into which it not infrequently hurtles us, and from which we awake with a smile, or a tear, a sigh, or a shriek of horror.

These reflections are due to the fact that some events of minor significance occurred during the few moments embraced in the attack and rescue, with

which the last chapter closed, that were not recalled by me until after many days, and then but indistinctly at first, like things seen through the mists and shadows of a dream. Wherefore I was led to ascribe their emergence from their shadowy environment into the lucid sphere of distinct perception and the province of memory to the agency named.

Two of the minor incidents of the onslaught recalled by me, as above intimated, were: first, the terrified look wherewith the make-believe Narragansett seemed to recognize Jephtha Allenberry in the very moment that he ducked and evaded the vengeful thrust of my sword; and, second, the bitter anathema that he hissed out against my fiancée as he sped past her in making his escape, with Owassa so close upon his heels that I had no fear but he would fall a victim to the tomahawk of this seemingly devoted friend and would-be executioner of my vengeance, and that I should have the supreme satisfaction of seeing his scalp held exultingly aloft, upon Owassa's return. An avowal that I am aware shows savage, albeit righteous, resentment rather than Christian forbearance.

However this may be, I was destined to be disappointed. For soon Owassa returned with the report that mine enemy had effected his escape through the aid of the gathering darkness. Wherefore I had to be content with the good fortune that had already come to me in the rescue of my sister, my fiancée, and her father, to say nothing of my share of the bless-

ings that they bestowed upon each and all of us alike, or of the exquisite pleasure I experienced from the fervency with which my sister and Miss Crandal embraced me and clung to me in the first transports of joy at their deliverance. An exhibition of gratitude, by the way, which, divested of the ties and feelings that gave it fervency, seemed scarcely fair to the rest, seeing they owed me no more than the others, as both Jephtha and Roland made so bold as to assure them. Whereto they replied that they had but followed a well established precedent in bestowing upon the leader, or officer, of the expedition all the honor and rewards of a military exploit, a fact that neither Roland nor Jephtha could very well gainsay.

But, as darkness was now upon us, and we liked not the idea of a night passed amidst the rigid forms of a half score of dead Indians, it behooved us to forego for a time these little pleasantries, and to seek a more congenial place to build our campfires, and to broil our venison for a repast that we were in a frame of mind and state of feeling to enjoy to the utmost, before lying down for such repose and slumber as might be had on a bed of autumn leaves, and with the heavens for covering.

Half an hour later we lighted our fires in a little cove at the head of a small ravine, at a safe distance from the scene of bloodshed and stark corpses, where we leisurely broiled our venison and ate our supper.

It was a clear night, with a full moon and a barely

perceptible feel of frost in the air. For it was exceedingly mild for the latter part of November, and a circle about the moon betokened that the atmospheric conditions were becoming favorable for rain within the next day or so. And the voices of the wilderness were many and varied, not to say weird and uncanny.

Hoot-owls were drearily calling and answering each other from the nearby ridges, interspersed with the long drawn out quaver of the screech-owl. And once the jarring rumble of the night-hawk (which sometimes prolongs its quest for prey beyond the dusk hour), in its swift, downward dash for its quarry, startled us in the midst of a jest. Anon, and seemingly from beyond the waters of the Shepaug, came the scream of a panther, like a woman's in distress, while the howl of wolves, punctuated by the short, sharp bark of the fox, broke upon us from all sides. At rare intervals the crash of some huge thing, such as a falling limb, a dead tree, or a fragment of rock from a cliff, increased the night's drear sounds, relieved only by the purling ripple of the waters over the rocks in the nearby rivulet, like the silvery tinkle of the cithern, caught here and there amidst the deep, sonorous sounds of the larger instruments heard in concert.

As I look back upon that night now, and recall the lightness and buoyancy of our spirits, rising so quickly from the depths to which they had descended, meseems the human heart is comparable to

nothing else under the sun for its variations, and the swiftness with which it can discard one emotion for another, particularly in the case of hope and despair. For had not our spirits bounded suddenly from the depths of despondency to the highest waves of elation, wherein we disported ourselves with an abandon that allowed no reckoning of that through which we had so recently passed?

For we sang, and we jested, and made merry to our very hearts' content in the light of our camp-fires there in the wilderness, unmindful meanwhile that the malignant ghosts of the Indians that we had slain yonder might be treading a war dance in the grim, impenetrable shadows, which the circle of light from our fires sought in vain to penetrate deeper and to illumina.

It was Jephtha Allenberry that gave the turn to every new ripple of merry laughter that drifted away through the shadows, only to be lost amidst the insistent voices of the night, and his melting, sentimental love ditties finally brought our spirits down from the airy heights to which his droll sayings and inimitable capers had sent them to the plane of a sweet and soothing sadness from which we presently glided away into dreamland.

One of the songs that he sang to a tender and touching refrain I make so bold as to transcribe (from the written ballad that he afterward furnished me) for the entertainment of such as may delight in themes of a sentimental and pathetic nature, to wit:

"Hast thou forgotten, Robin Gray,
How trustingly I clung to thee,
As we fled o'er ye haunted lea,
Toward ye kirk not far away,
Where you assured me soon I'd be
Thy happy bride, false Robin Gray!

"Ye moon was shining then, I mind,
Flooding ye moor with silv'ry light,
When I crept forth that summer night,
Leaving my father's lodge behind,
To join thee, Robin Gray, in flight,
Leaving my father's lodge behind.

"And I recall ye mournful cry
Which came to me across ye moor,
From some lone nightbird, drifting o'er,
As forth to join thee, Robin, I
Crept, thief-like, from my father's door,
To fare with thee, or live, or die.

"Betimes you know, false Robin Gray,
We reached ye kirk and, leaving me,
You made believe you'd go and see
Ye curate, but returned to say
He was not there, and wheedled me
To trust thee still, false Robin Gray!

"Oh! little dreamed I, then, in shame
I'd wander back across ye moor,
And grovel at my father's door,
(My bairn without a father's name)
An outcast thence forevermore,
My bairn denied its father's name!"

It would prove an imposition little short of an ordeal to subject the reader to the prosy details of our return trip across the intervening wilderness, seeing it was without incident or casualty worth chronicling. Besides, it was necessarily slow and tedious on account of the ladies.

Naturally, the people were much rejoiced at our safe return with the captives, and many and hearty were the congratulations that we each and all received.

It had become generally known immediately after Captain Wadsworth's return with the men that accompanied him back from the original expedition about the part Lieutenant Highland had played in the matter, and when it became known from us that he had been found accompanying the band in the guise of a Narragansett, the feeling of scorn and contempt people have for a renegade naturally pervaded every heart, and it would have gone hard with him if they could have laid their hands on him about that time. And albeit the opinion was general that he would never dare to show his face there again, it will be seen later on that they did not know the gall of this imp of Satan.

CHAPTER XIV

The four or five weeks immediately following our return from the quests already noted, embracing as they did the Christmas holidays, were passed in such gay and festive intercourse as young people are naturally addicted to. For it happened during these last weeks of the waning year that nothing occurred in the way of Indian outbreaks to call out the trainmen, or in any manner to interrupt the quiet, or to disturb the equanimity, of the people of Hartford, or its vicinity.

Wherefore, aside from the feeling of discontent occasioned by the onerous tax imposed by Sir Edmund Andros about this time, there was nothing to impede, nor even so much as to ripple, the current of merriment and social good-will into which we had drifted, in obedience to the call of the season, when past cares are forgotten, and the possibility of future ones are deemed too remote and indefinite for serious consideration. And thus we went through the holidays, danced the old year out and the new one in, and then settled down again into the even tenor of our ways, ready to face the hazards involved in any exigency that might arise, the past having taught us that we need scarcely expect exemption

from those trials and crosses incident to the transition of a country like this from savagery to civilization.

In the meantime people were coming and going, many from other sections being added to the population of Hartford, which, by reason of the like, had come to be reckoned a place of considerable consequence.

Among others that had come and located there prior to the incidents narrated in previous chapters was a family of the name of Walton. The family consisted of four, namely: Ezra Walton, master; Cynthia, his dame; a daughter of twelve, named Saphira, and a son ten years old, named Pete. This family appeared to be above the average in the matter of intelligence. Master and dame were devoted church attendants, and much addicted to reading in the Bible, while the children, Saphira and Pete, seemed to have been taught to respect and practice its teachings.

Moreover, Ezra Walton, but for the fact that he made no bones of being in sympathy with the course of the despotic and oppressive Andros, might have been highly considered by all classes. Even as it was, on account of his religious predilections, most of the members of the Congregation looked upon him with much favor. He was therefore in a position to achieve a very considerable following in any division of sentiment where he chanced to be a party to a controversy, particularly where the same in

any degree affected religious matters, along which lines there was more or less trouble during these times.

His occupation was that of a shopkeeper, wherein he dispensed merchandise of general necessity, and in which he had prospered to the extent that he was not without a fair degree of commercial standing, both at home and abroad.

But the placid state of feeling into which we had come in the absence of any visible or apparent cause to the contrary was destined not to last long. For scarcely more than two weeks of the New Year had slipped by before there came whisperings of preternatural doings in different parts of the borough. Pieces of brick, and other missiles, were hurled, it was claimed, against certain houses by invisible hands. Soon these whisperings increased to a great noise, and extended beyond the town bounds, causing those in the nearby settlements to prick up their ears and hearken with more or less credulity to the rumors. Then it came to be said that Hartford was beset with witches, especially when fires began to break out in unaccountable ways in most unexpected places.

And, as a result of these things, the latent superstition of the people was thoroughly awakened and set upon edge, as it were, insomuch that they began to speculate and surmise, bestirring themselves meanwhile for a clue to those through whom the devil accomplished these things, with a view to inflicting

upon them the penalty provided for such diabolical practices.

And albeit these things all occurred at night, when such might easily have been effected by some viciously inclined person without much danger of detection, yet this fact was never taken into consideration by those that set most store by the like, and that ascribed them by preference to preternatural causes instead. For the people that were most interested in these things, and that deemed themselves most affected thereby, were principally of that class whose religious zeal carried them to the extremes of fanaticism, from whence their natural superstition led them on to credit the most transparent frauds to the devil and his imps with a steadfastness that should have shamed the least enlightened of the most benighted ages.

Meanwhile I was seeing much of my betrothed, both at her father's home and at the little social gatherings at the neighboring homes round about, whereof the entertainment consisted of games, or such plays as gave us a chance to disport ourselves in a semi-Terpsichorean manner to the chant of "Sister Phœbe," and "I am a poor old chimney sweeper," and the like tunes, so familiar to young folks. Sometimes we took short strolls about town, when the weather permitted, which, sooth to say, was not often, seeing it came to be an unusually cold winter, with only now and then a day bright and cheerful-looking enough to tempt us.

And on the occasions when we did venture out I came to notice that Saphira and Peter, the two children of Ezra Walton, as the reader will remember, whose place of abode was close to Captain Crandal's, invariably tagged along at our heels, frequently darting past us in a rude and ugly manner, sometimes uttering smutty remarks. The latter was especially true of the girl, who, it chanced, had a most brazen face and foul mouth, when she saw fit so to fashion the one and exercise the other in the use of vile epithets, despite the reputation that she, in common with her brother, had for training in the precepts of the Bible.

On the occasion of one of these little strolls happened that which cast over our lives a cloud of such portentous gloom as but few young lovers ever found themselves overshadowed by without a moment's warning. It was about two o'clock in the afternoon of a bright, crisp day toward the latter part of January. A snow that had fallen some two weeks before still lay upon the ground, and, in consequence of the customary travel to and fro, that upon the walks had become packed till it was almost as hard and smooth as ice, making walking somewhat difficult and precarious. We were therefore exercising caution by way of guarding against a possible fall, when the two Walton children, who had as usual been tagging at our heels, shot past us, the girl bumping against Miss Crandal with a force that must have thrown her from her feet if I had not held

on to her and sustained her. Whereupon, vexed beyond her usual calm and power of restraint, she administered a mild rebuke to the little imp, who immediately fell down in a well simulated fit.

After the most approved fashion of those really so afflicted, she writhed and squirmed there upon the hard, packed snow, chewing her tongue and frothing at the mouth in the most horrible manner imaginable. Instantly Miss Crandal was down upon her knees beside her, chafing her hands and rubbing her face with the little snow that she was able to scrape up, and in other ways trying to bring her out of what she verily believed was a genuine attack of epilepsy, as who would not?

We chanced to be in a populous section of the town, and, as invariably happens in cases of untoward occurrences, it was but a few seconds ere quite a large crowd had gathered about us, among whom were not a few of that excessively superstitious class that are always ready to attribute such things to unnatural causes. Hence it was no time before I heard it whispered from one to another, "She is bewitched—the child has been bewitched," and immediately the very devil was to pay, and nothing at hand, apparently, wherewithal to discharge the obligation. For at the time it never occurred to me that blood would be exacted in settlement thereof, and least of all the blood of my heart's delight, the beautiful creature kneeling there beside, and vainly ministering to, the supposed epileptic. At least not

until after the girl had concluded her well acted rôle and had openly charged that Miss Crandal had, by a strange sign and mumbling of words, bewitched her and thrown her into the horrible fit that they had all witnessed.

Thereupon the word went forth, of course, that the witch had at last been discovered!

CHAPTER XV

To those endowed with a sane, sober mind it may seem utterly preposterous that the bias of a people, howsoever ignorant and superstitious, could be such as to blind them to the possibility of fraud in cases like the foregoing. But if the reader understood the deep-seated superstition and mad, compelling fanaticism by which an overwhelming number of the New England people were led to credit as Gospel truth the most preposterous allegations against those who chanced to be so unfortunate as to be suspected of witchcraft, he could then fully appreciate the serious predicament into which the charge of the Walton child had brought my betrothed.

And this charge, coming so close upon the heels of the alleged preternatural occurrences of the past week or two, was all that was necessary to bring the whole pack of ignoramuses yelping and snarling about the half dazed, still kneeling form of their would-be victim, insomuch that I had much ado to keep them back, while I raised her to her feet, and conducted her back to her home, whither we were followed and deluged with a torrent of bitter epithets and direful execrations.

The panic that seized the people of Hartford, when it had been noised about that the supposed

instrument of the devil had been caught redhanded, was something beyond my power to describe. Nor did it require any very great stretch of the imagination to perceive how it would end with my fiancée unless something could be done to assuage the bitter feeling that had immediately succeeded the diabolical charge of the malicious girl. The imposture, it seemed, had not been suspected by any except the family and friends of the victim, who of course not only knew that the charge was utterly false, but that the fit was feigned as a basis for the accusation; and that back of it all were older heads, some one or more who had arranged the thing to that very end, and that she had been well and ably drilled and practiced in the rôle that she had enacted with such cleverness.

To make all this apparent to others, however, was quite a different matter. The very face of the little impostor, when she saw fit to mask it with the innocent, guileless expression that she was capable of assuming at a moment's notice, if perchance she was caught without it, which was seldom enough to make it a rarity, was decidedly against us in any attempt that we might make to discredit the genuineness of the fit that she affected. Only on the occasions when she had tagged along behind my fiancée and me had I ever noticed her wearing the impish expression that showed the devilry she was capable of.

Of course Captain Crandal and his wife, and scarcely less my own father and mother, and my

sister Jocelyn, were well-nigh beside themselves with anxiety when they understood what had occurred to cause the mob, yelping, snarling, and howling, to pursue Miss Crandal to the very threshold of her home.

The only hope that we could possibly glean from the situation was that in case the malicious child was afforded no opportunity to reenact her rôle upon the streets, or elsewhere, under the pretext of a look or a word from Miss Crandal, the magistrates would take no notice of the matter, unless the parents of the girl should take it upon themselves to sue out a warrant, the probabilities of their doing which, however, being sufficient nearly or quite to offset the little hope that we were able to squeeze from such a contingency. That no opportunity might be allowed the little imp to repeat her performance at my fiancée's expense, and thereby strengthen her charge, it was determined that the latter would not go upon the street or elsewhere outside of her own home for a few weeks at least.

Yet, when we came to think over this precaution, it was deemed an unnecessary one. For was it not a well established fact (in the estimation of the credulous and superstitious fools at least) that simply by *pinching her bedclothes*, and *giving the devil leave to torment in her semblance*, she could exercise her powers of evil as well from her couch there at home as if she were face to face with her victims!

For the time being we considered not the stigma

that the diabolical charge entailed. We knew that she was innocent, and therefore the belief of her detractors weighed lightly in the balance against the precious life at stake, should the baleful charge be pressed before a credulous and superstitious tribunal, as it would be, if at all, since all the magistrates were more or less affected by the heresy, more especially since they had as authority for their belief in witchcraft such a noted and pious jurist as Sir Mathew Hale. Besides, had not all of them read Glanvil's witch stories, to say nothing of the published account of the witch trials in Suffolk, which had occurred only three years before.

Of course, the few not burdened with the heresy, and such as were free from the taint of religious fanaticism, gave us the support of their sympathy. But what was that of itself alone, if they had not the courage to come forward and denounce with us the whole thing as a rank and diabolical imposture, wherein the wiles and machinations of her arch enemy, Lieutenant Highland, were apparent enough to any but the bitterly biased, or the most sluggish, mind? Yet they dared not do this, lest they be likewise brought under suspicion of being in league with the devil.

For were there not many instances where even the husbands of wives charged with witchcraft, not to mention fathers and mothers of daughters so accused, and *vice versa*, had been dragged before the magistrates and suffered death, merely because they inter-

ested themselves in behalf of their loved ones? Yea, their devilish zeal had been known to go even further than that in driving people to turn against their own flesh and blood for their poor, pitiful life's sake. Parents, whose love of life outweighed their puny spirits of martyrdom and love for their offspring, and children, who shamelessly preferred life rather than death for their parents' sake, had chosen to testify for the prosecution, well knowing meanwhile that their evidence meant death to the loved ones. Nevertheless, there were a few whose friendship and courage outweighed all possible consequences to themselves, and who not only came forward with words of sympathy, but who made so bold as to exercise their ingenuity to the utmost in attempts to assuage public sentiment and render the chances of a clamor for punishment less likely.

As might be expected, the chief of these were Jephtha Allenberry and Roland Wadsworth, aided in no small degree by Owassa, whose part in the recent expedition and rescue of the captives had given him standing and a kind of prestige with the people of Hartford, where he now passed much of his time.

Then in an unexpected quarter of the borough rose up a friend who, albeit a slave, and therefore so small in the scale of consideration as to have little or no weight, except in the kitchen of the master to whom she had been leased by her owner for a mere pittance, on account of her approaching decrepitude. This was an old Guinea woman, in



the home of the very girl to whom my fiancée owed her present precarious predicament. And notwithstanding she was a most grotesque specimen of humanity, black as the mythical Erebus was supposed to be, and ugly as the wildest fancy could picture one, she was nevertheless endowed with a keen, penetrating shrewdness and cunning, amounting almost to the gift of divination. Moreover, she had the courage to express, as best she might in her peculiar and somewhat difficult patois, without fear or favor the conclusions that her singular faculty of discernment enabled her to reach. With the legend to the effect that she had been the daughter of a great king, and therefore a princess in her own land ere being abducted and brought here and sold into bondage, these memoirs have nothing to do, seeing that that was in itself a tale of interest and pathos.

It was soon known that this humble creature with the prophetic insight had, on the very night succeeding the event, and in the presence of some of the numerous folks whose curiosity had led them to call at the Walton home, charged the little imp with perpetrating an imposture. The report was that Candy, which was the sobriquet by which she was called, had said to her: "Lookee heah, Sappie Wal'on, lis'en t'me, chile, lis'en t' Can'y, an' tell 'er whut's all dis 'bout yo' habin' a fit, an' den 'tendin' lak dat po' gal 'witched yeou, huh? Yeou no mo' had fits dan Can'y has now, yeou lil imp, yeou! De Ole Boy nebuh mek her pestuh yeou, but yeou his puppet

t' pestuh her. Yeou no fool Can'y. Yeou no fool nobody ceptin' fools, an' goodness knows dey's a plenty heah, er dah wouldn't be so many t'blbe de pack o' lies yeou done gone an' tole on dat po', sweet gal.

"Ef she'd on'y up an' choke yeou twel yeou black in de face, 'stead o' wukin' wid an' cryin' obuh yeou lak she done, she'd a-seed how quick yeou quit yo' foolin' t'get yo' bref back ag'in. Dat's whut Can'y do ef ebuh yeou try yo' debil's doin's on her. On'y Can'y not let yeou get yo' bref back any mo', but kill yeou daid. Yessuh, Can'y kill yeou daid, daid, daid, an' den go hang fuh muhduh, not fuh witchcraft."

And it was said the look and convulsive grip of the long, black, talon-like fingers that accompanied this declaration were sufficiently ominous to awe the most foolhardy.

CHAPTER XVI

Two days later there came a rumor that the minister of the Congregation, one Ira Jones, was urging Ezra Walton to take out a warrant, charging Miss Crandal with witchcraft. And of course this added much to the gravity of the case in our estimation, giving it a yet more threatening and hopeless aspect naturally, since we had been trusting that if Walton was not urged into it, he would let it drop. The minister that was urging Walton to this course was a wizen-faced, sinister-visaged specimen of the cloth, whose usual expression of countenance when on the trail of an alleged witch was something in the nature of a wolfish snarl. He was a man who derived far more satisfaction from running down and helping to procure a death sentence against such than from prayer and thanksgiving to his Maker, or from the bestowal of alms on the poor and needy of his flock, judging from the bitter, vindictive rôle that he had always played in such cases.

Therefore, we had nothing to hope for from him or his equally vindictive Congregation, who never failed to aid and abet him in procuring convictions, which meant the death penalty of course. For witchcraft, as all perhaps know, was a capital offense in Connecticut, standing second in the list of fourteen capital crimes, and in the following language, to wit :

"If any man or woman be a witch, that is, hath or consulteth with a familiar spirit, they shall be put to death."

It seemed a foregone conclusion that Ezra Walton, being a member of the Congregation, would do as the preacher advised and take out a warrant, which meant an immediate hearing before some one or more of his Majesty's justices, and that in turn meant commitment to jail to await the action of the grand jury at the Court of Assistants in May.

This Ira Jones, the minister, was an oldish man, and there was a tradition to the effect that in his younger days he had been apprehended for the second time and condemned for contemptuous conduct and language toward the preacher and the Word in time of services, and the penalty for the second offense in such cases being the payment of five pounds into the public treasury, or in default of this, to stand "two hours upon a block or stoole four feet high, on a Lecture Day, with a paper fixed on his breast, written with capital letters,

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that others may feare and bee ashamed of breaking into the like wickedness." And he, having not the five pounds with which to pay the fine, was so labeled and made to stand publicly on a Lecture Day as an example."

But as to how he had lived that down and suc-

ceeded in being ordained to preach the Word that he had reviled, the tradition was silent. Possibly through the blood of the many alleged witches that he had helped to bring to death. Such was the man who was most active in trying to have my fiancée dragged before the magistrates on a charge of witchcraft. Do you wonder that I was well-nigh distracted at the prospect?

Moreover, his tireless perseverance in such deviltry was proverbial. For albeit Hartford had afforded him but few cases wherein to exercise his diabolical penchant, yet he had taken a leading part in those at Springfield and Groton, insomuch that he had come to be an expert in securing and manipulating testimony in such cases. How I wanted to throttle him!

Although my heart was oppressed by the darkest forebodings, I was nevertheless active and untiring in my efforts to counteract the pernicious influences at work in the hearts and minds of that ridiculously credulous and superstitious people, but only to find the preacher's influence waxing, and the clamor for my fiancée's arrest more insistent, so that I knew not which way to turn for succor or comfort.

Only from Jephtha Allenberry received we any hope. He alone of our outspoken friends seemed to glimpse a ray of hope, and upon the strength of it, sought to cheer and buoy us up at all times. And this optimism of his was not without a soothing effect. Yet when deprived of his presence and the

direct influence of his personal magnetism, our hopes waned, and allowed us to drop back into the former state of gloom, and the cultivation of our well grounded forebodings. For scarcely anything is so nursed and tended as a solicitude of the character that filled our hearts. How could it be otherwise with such a love as mine? For I make so bold as to say that mine was of that intense type that bars the possibility of alienation, or the setting up of a new one in its place. Bereaved of its object, a love like mine for Helen Crandal becomes a hopeless derelict upon the sea of its own emotions, at the mercy of its changeless, abiding sorrow. And the vision of myself thus adrift was, in my own estimation at least, neither vain nor far-fetched, and a foretaste of its reality was vouchsafed me, I conceived, in the ordeal through which I was then passing.

Knowing, as he must from all that has been said, that we were fully cognizant of the deep-seated prejudice that we should have to contend with in our efforts to save my fiancée from conviction when the dreaded time should come, the reader has no doubt wondered why we did not make an effort, while it was yet time, to move her clandestinely beyond the judicial pale of those clamoring for her arrest. To such I will say that we had sought from the first to persuade her to that end, but without avail, she contending that such a step would only serve to make them think that she had been driven by a guilty conscience to resort to flight to save herself.

One feature of the matter that went far toward augmenting the sense of hopelessness that I came to experience was that so few of my old friends, and fewer still of the many that my fiancée had apparently made during her short sojourn there, came forward with words of cheer and encouragement. For, aside from Jephtha Allenberry, Roland Wadsworth, and one or two others, none of the younger people came near us. Among the older folks I fared no better, if I except Governor Treat and his wife, and Captain Wadsworth. All held aloof, or, if a meeting on the street became unavoidable, they vouchsafed me only a slight inclination of the head by way of a greeting that they would fain have withheld.

But the one whose coldness gave me the most concern was the Right Honorable Samuel Wyllys, his Majesty's magistrate there, whose friendship for myself and family I had never had cause to doubt. For as it would be before him that our case would be called in all probability, his evident avoidance of me was a source of much worry, as it made the affair look even more ominous, if possible, as I looked at it. It now appeared that he too had imbibed the baleful heresy.

CHAPTER XVII

While not unusually so, the weather at this time was so cold that people stirred about as little as possible, and that little from necessity, rather than from choice. As previously stated, snow had lain on the ground until it had become packed, and the paths of most frequent travel were as glazed and slippery as the surface of frozen streams and of other bodies of fresh water. And hence, when one was seen abroad within the last two or three days, the impression naturally obtained that such was impelled either by duty or necessity to face the bleak northern winds, tearing madly through the bare branches of the trees, and howling dismally about the eaves of the houses, imparting to the temperature a tang or sting that penetrated the flesh through the warmest of clothes, like that of brine at its lowest temperature to the hand thrust into it.

It was as the instrument of the devil, however, rather than from duty or necessity that Ira Jones, the meddlesome minister hitherto mentioned, accompanied by the Walton girl and her father, was seen to enter the home of the Honorable Samuel Wyllys early in the afternoon of the coldest day thus far of the winter. And when a little later Eben Sawter,

the constable, was seen making his way toward the home of Captain Crandal, none but the dullest-minded of those that had witnessed these ominous signs but knew that a warrant had been secured for Miss Crandal, and that Eben Sawter was now on his way there to arrest her, a thing that none except her particular friends would have lifted a hand to prevent, restrained therefrom either by the fear previously hinted at, or by their foolish superstition. "Oh, the shame,—the burning disgrace of it all," I murmured helplessly, when I saw all this, and realized that the much dreaded hour had come.

Our house stood diagonally across the street from Mr. Wyllys', as I have already said, with the large, hollow oak (in which it was now whispered that the Charter had been secreted the night that it so mysteriously disappeared from the table in the Assembly hall) standing directly in line between his front door and ours.

Our dinner had been later that day than usual, and I had just finished mine and walked to the one window that the room contained. There I stood,—watching through the small, frost-figured panes the wind-tossed branches of the few old forest trees that had been left standing here and there upon either side of the street, especially the gnarled, stubby limbs of the hardy old oak above mentioned, which yielded and swayed far less gracefully than the wide-reaching, supple branches of the elms, yet which nevertheless danced a merry short step to the wind's

wild whim,—when the front door of the Wyllys home opened, and I saw the preacher, Ezra Walton, and the girl emerge, and pause under the old oak in front. At almost the same moment Eben Sawter, the constable, came round the corner and joined them. The preacher had a folded paper in his hand, and this he handed to the constable. Evidently Sawter had been notified when and where to meet him, as it was scarcely probable that his coming just in the nick of time was a mere coincidence.

And, as if through some such subtle agency as telepathy, everybody had been simultaneously apprised of what was going on, the latches on many doors (which the intense cold made it necessary to keep closed and latched) were lifted, the doors slightly opened, and in the narrow openings thus afforded faces appeared. All eyes were directed toward the tall, gaunt form of Eben Sawter, making his way slowly toward Captain Crandal's against the biting east wind, now playing with the tail of his coon-skin cap and the loose flowing ends of his bright red comforter as for hours it had toyed with the out-hanging latch-strings and the wreaths of blue smoke curling upward from the chimney-tops.

Of course my mind grasped the situation instantly. Then ensued a confusion of thoughts and a groping for a means whereby I might thwart their purpose, even to the unlawful thought of dashing out and knocking the constable senseless ere he could reach the object of his quest, and then forcibly bear-

ing her away out of reach of her persecutors before they could recover their wits and reattempt a consummation of their purpose. At last one semilucid thought came to me, and I thought that I might at least go to her and give her the support and comfort of my love in that trying moment, and I grabbed up my head-piece and rushed out into the street.

The preacher had a way of rubbing his hands together when particularly pleased over some prospect, or satisfied with some effort, and was thus gleefully conducting himself at the moment that I emerged from the house with no thought of anything but hastening to Captain Crandal's. But at the sight of this self-congratulatory maneuver of his, over the success of his first legal move against my beloved, all the latent devil in me rose to the surface, crying out for vengeance on this conscienceless enemy of hers. Therefore, instead of making post-haste for her home as intended, I made swiftly for the little group of three under the old hollow oak across the street. I was wrought to the highest pitch of resentment by the aggravating manner of the now thoroughly hated man, and I determined to do him some fearful bodily harm.

And it would undoubtedly have gone hard with him, and likewise with the accursed perjurer, Ezra Walton, had not the most unexpected and singular thing happened to claim my attention ere it was possible for me to reach them, an account of which will follow in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XVIII

As already stated, I had suddenly resolved to give the detestable preacher and Ezra Walton a thorough drubbing, if in my power to do so, and had almost reached them, when all unexpectedly Jephtha Allenberry came round the corner near which they stood, and when in the act of passing them he stopped suddenly, recoiled a step or so, and then threw out his hands, as if to ward off something so fearful of aspect that it had brought into his eyes a look of abject terror. Then he shrieked wildly and fell limply to the ground. And thereupon began a series of such fearful contortions of his limbs, such foaming at the mouth, and other evidences of such terrible suffering as I hope never again to witness.

But an instant ago I had had but one thought, one purpose in my heart, and that was to administer a severe beating to the preacher and Ezra Walton. Now this thirst for summary vengeance on them had given place to a deep and painful solicitude for my friend, Jephtha Allenberry, whom I verily believed was in the very last throes, and his death but a matter of moments only.

It looked to me that, even if the malady with which he had been so suddenly and violently taken was not fatal, there was danger that he would dash

his head against one of the exposed roots of the old oak with a force that must kill him, so violent were his contortions of body and limb. To prevent this if possible, I threw myself upon him, and then with all the weight of my body and the strength of my arms managed to prevent him from doing so.

Meanwhile a crowd, attracted by the fearful shriek that he had emitted ere sinking to the ground, was rapidly gathering about us, and even the constable, Eben Sawter, who had heard it and turned in time to recognize and see him fall, ran back to become one of the more or less horrified spectators of his terrible plight and apparent death-struggle.

In the crowd thus quickly collected were many women, some of whom added to the tragic feature of the thing by wailings and tears. For Jephtha Allenberry was a general favorite, as previously intimated, and aside from the shock such a spectacle occasioned, their hearts were sorely affected at the prospect of his immediate death. For no one might look upon that fearfully distorted countenance, and witness his struggles with what seemed nothing less than the grim reaper himself, and then console himself with anything like hope.

In the meantime the preacher and Ezra Walton had stood as if they had been suddenly turned to stone, while Saphira Walton, the little imp that had played Miss Orandal such a dirty, malicious trick, clung to her father's skirts and looked on in wild-eyed terror. Altogether, it was a horrible scene, and

one impossible to describe in a manner calculated to give one a reasonable conception of some of the more striking and unusual features of the contest that he appeared to be waging with death. As for myself I can truthfully say that I really believed he was dying, and was well-nigh beside myself with grief at the seeming certainty of it. For I had always liked him in a way, despite the clownish antics that constituted one of the angles of his many-sided character; but, as the reader knows, he had greatly endeared himself to me recently. Besides, I had never realized until then how much I had somehow come to look to him to extricate my fiancée from the predicament in which her enemies had at last succeeded in placing her.

About this time some one in the crowd produced a flask of rum, and with the assistance of two or three strong men, I was enabled to force a few drops between his lips, and immediately thereafter his muscles relaxed somewhat, the contortions became less violent, and I experienced a gleam of hope. Presently his eyes, which till now had been wide open and staring vacantly, closed softly, his breathing became something like normal, and he seemed to sleep the sleep of utter exhaustion. The next instant, however, we were all thrown into a veritable panic by his suddenly bounding to his feet, staring wildly about him until his eyes fell upon the preacher and Ezra Walton, whereupon he shrieked out: "They bewitched me! They bewitched me! See! The

devil is standing right there between them now! Oh-o-o!" And then was off round the corner, as if pursued by the very devil himself.

It is quite beyond the ability of a mere novice, such as I acknowledge myself to be, to describe the tumult and scene that immediately followed the charge of witchcraft made by Jephtha Allenberry against the preacher and Ezra Walton, the truth of which there was scarcely one, who had witnessed his apparent affliction, with the temerity to express a doubt, even if he had entertained one.

Soon a murmur arose and indications of a demonstration that boded no good to the accused, seeing and understanding which they began to protest their innocence and to edge away in the hope of an opportunity to escape the fury that they felt was likely at any moment now to vent itself on them. For none knew better than they how popular Jephtha Allenberry was, and that if the people actually believed that they were responsible for what they had just witnessed, as he had openly charged, they were likely to take it on themselves to avenge him, and their lives might be the forfeit exacted.

In the meantime I had done some rapid thinking, and the result was that a great light had suddenly illumined my mind, causing me to smile covertly, despite my deep anxiety of a few moments ago, when I verily believed my friend dying. But I said nothing, of course, yet seeing my opportunity to do my fiancée a good turn by taking advantage of the

present situation, I turned at once to his Majesty's justice, Mr. Samuel Wyllys. He, at the first intimation of that which was taking place directly in front of his house, had come out and stood looking on in the quiet, dignified way peculiar to him, and I asked for a warrant for Ira Jones and Ezra Walton for having exercised the arts of witchcraft, according to the declaration of Jephtha Allenberry,—a right vouchsafed me, or any one else that had witnessed it, and that felt interest enough in the unfortunate victim of their wiles, or in the general welfare, to exercise it. And having only a short time before issued a warrant for Miss Crandal on what might be considered less conclusive evidence of witchcraft than my demand was based on, and as he had himself witnessed Jephtha's suffering, though with what degree of credulity I could not of course say, he could not, I felt, consistently refuse me.

Nor did he. On the contrary he asked me to step into the house with him, where he immediately issued the warrant and handed it to me, and with it in my hand I returned quickly to the street in quest of Eben Sawter, whom, luckily, I found still there upon the ground. Going directly to him, I placed the paper in his hands, with instructions that he go and do his duty at once, at the same time chuckling silently at the thought of how these persecutors of my betrothed would, in all probability, be first to have to swallow a dose similar to the one that they had prepared for her.

And do you wonder that this singularly fortunate turn of the tide, with its unmistakable manifestation of poetic justice, had carried me to the extremes of elation? Was it not human, and therefore perfectly natural?

CHAPTER XIX

I was very careful, however, to conceal my feeling of exultation, lest I be suspected of that by which I was prompted to assume the responsibility of procuring the warrant for their arrest and probable arraignment on a charge that I very well knew had no foundation in fact, for the simple reason that there was no such thing as witchcraft, except as it found existence in the minds of the extremely ignorant, or the grossly superstitious, of which two classes there were many, as I knew to my sorrow. Nevertheless, I could see no very great harm in availing myself of the opportunity thus unexpectedly afforded me to fight them with their own weapons, in accordance with the old adage that advises us to fight the devil with fire.

When I came out with the warrant I found that the greater part of the crowd had gone away, either to seek their own firesides and discuss the sensational affair with their families, or to some of the shops and the public rooms of the taverns to talk it over among themselves, as is the habit of people under such circumstances. And as the accused had gone likewise, Eben Sawter was under the necessity of going in search of them, a duty that, from the way he

smiled when I gave him the paper, I had cause to believe he undertook with relish.

When Jephtha Allenberry came out of what the people all verily believed to be the "spell" into which the preacher and Walton had thrown him, and then fled in the seemingly terrified manner already shown, my first impulse had been to try to overtake him and to get him to his lodgings in the Graham home, where, by permission of the Selectmen (in accordance with one of those quaint old laws, still in effect in Hartford, which made it a penalty of twenty shillings a week to give a young or unmarried man lodging in a private family without the consent of the proper authorities), he had resided ever since he came to Hartford.

And while upon this matter it were as well, perhaps, to go on and say that a like penalty was assessed against any young or single man that attempted to keep house alone. Wherefore it so happened that many young men, whose inclination, or business purposes, led them from the shelter of the parental roof, were often coerced thereby into matrimony, though whether the law was designed to that end or not—that is, to promote matrimony, and thus prevent an excess of old bachelors—I know not. If so, it is assuredly a good law, and well worthy of perpetuating. For nothing, meseems, is more intolerable in a community than a lot of men who have elected themselves to a life of celibacy. I say nothing about old maids. The cause for their single lot is,

in most cases, unavoidable on their part, poor things, and far be it from me to add a drop of gall to the bitterness that they suffer by reason of the slight put upon them.

But I started out to say that I was prevented from following Jephtha Allenberry by the illumination of mind, alluded to in a former chapter, whereby I was enabled to divine the purpose of that seeming affliction of his. But after I had accomplished what I felt in that moment of enlightenment he had designed that I should, I at once made my way to his lodgings, not doubting that I should find him well and in his right mind, if not impatiently awaiting my advent. Nor were my calculations amiss. For he was sitting quietly before the warm woodfire in his room when I entered without the ceremony of knocking, and the comical leer that he greeted me with was at once a confirmation of my suspicions and a warning to say nothing from which those in the adjoining room might get a hint of the fraud that he had perpetrated on the crowd for the purpose of implicating the two busybodies in so-called witchcraft, and thereby lessen their influence in the case against my fiancée.

It developed that he had contemplated the thing ever since the preacher had shown his hand, but had been prevented from putting it into execution by lack of a favorable opportunity. Nor was he expecting it, nor was he exactly prepared for it, when it did come. He had heard a rumor to the effect that

the minister and Walton had gone to the magistrate's office, and, suspecting the nature of their mission, he had gone round that way to learn what he might relative thereto, and chanced suddenly upon them in the manner already known to the reader. Thereupon he had proceeded to put his scheme into execution, with the effective results previously told.

Among the overwhelming number in Hartford that believed in witchcraft, and particularly among those that credited the charge made by the Walton girl against Miss Crandal, were the members of the Graham family, where Jephtha made his home. Hence, in speaking of, and laughing over, the matter appertaining to the part that he had played with a success that had discounted his wildest expectations, we had to be very cautious, lest they discover the fraud, and the case that he had established against the persecutors of my fiancée be destroyed.

He had not met any of the Graham family during the few minutes that had elapsed since his return to his room, and as none of them had been out of the house since about noon, they were in total ignorance of what had occurred. Wherefore, deeming it advisable that it come to them accidentally, Jephtha began in a rather loud and seemingly agitated voice to lament having been made a target for these familiars of the devil, insomuch that it was scarcely possible for them not to hear and understand the purport of his complaint, gathered as they were in the adjoining room. And in a little or no time Silas

Graham, head and master of the house, came bolting into the room where we were, his eyes narrowed down to two distinct, impelling question-marks.

Thereupon I told him briefly what had occurred, and how terribly Jephtha had suffered at the hands of the minister and Ezra Walton, going into details sufficiently to let him understand that Jephtha had declared that he saw Satan standing directly between the two, thus showing the familiar relations existing between them and his satanic majesty. Silas Graham seemed utterly dumfounded at the disclosure, and unable to speak for a few seconds. At last he ejaculated faintly: "Ira Jones, the minister! Ira Jones a familiar of Sathan's! Surely, Marcus, you're joking."

"Not at all, Mr. Graham," I replied soberly. "If there is such a thing as witchcraft, he was as surely bewitched by them there in front of Mr. Wyllys' house a little while ago as there are those ready and willing to do the devil's bidding. If you have any doubt about it, go out and ask others. For you will find many who saw just what I did."

All this time Jephtha had sat there, his elbows upon his knees and his face buried in his hands, moaning and groaning in the most dismal way imaginable, albeit I could see he was well-nigh ready to explode with suppressed laughter.

Then, still murmuring: "The minister a familiar of Sathan? In God's holy name, what is the world coming to when even the ministers are selling them-

selves to the devil?" he turned in a dazed sort of way and went back into his own room, told his family what he had just heard, secured his head-piece, and a moment later we heard him leave the house. In a very little while thereafter he received confirmation of what I had told him, and thereupon became one of the more clamorous for their conviction and punishment. For he was of the old Puritan stock, and could neither overlook nor condone evil in any one.

And what than familiarity with Satan could be a greater evil in his estimation?

CHAPTER XX

On account of my desire to reach Captain Crandal's before the constable should, with the writ for the arrest of my fiancée, in order to encourage and support her as best I might under the trying circumstances, I remained but a little while longer with Jephtha Allenberry in his room at the Graham home. That she had already heard about the sensational affair on the street a short time before I felt reasonably sure, as I had requested my father, who had been a witness of the scene, to go to Captain Crandal's for that purpose.

My father was still there when I arrived, which was not for some little time after I had left Jephtha. For upon turning the corner at Squire Wyllys' home, I ran into a yet larger and greatly more excited crowd than had been there when Jephtha enacted his rôle of victim of witchcraft, the cause for which I immediately learned was the arrival of Eben Sawter a few moments before with the preacher and Ezra Walton in charge, and I also learned that I was wanted inside by his Majesty's justice, Squire Wyllys. Thereupon I entered the house, and two more abject looking creatures than the prisoners were I have never seen. And no wonder. The

clamor outside, and distinctly audible inside of the house, was beginning to have a most threatening and menacing sound, rapidly taking on the proportions of a regular uproar, in which nothing was distinguishable except an occasional cry for summary vengeance, coming from one here and there that seemed more outspoken and insistent than the rest.

In fact, matters became so threatening that Squire Wyllys decided that it would be dangerous to attempt to go ahead with the examination that afternoon, as intended, and ordered the constable to convey the prisoners out the back way to the jail for safe keeping until such time as it might appear advisable to bring them out for the inquisition.

Thereupon the lawyer, whom they had hurriedly summoned thither to conduct the defense, rose to his feet after a hasty consultation with his trembling clients, and informed his honor that it was their desire to waive the matter till the grand jury should convene in May. To this his honor readily consented, of course, and proceeded to make out a mittimus and to hand it to the constable, who thereupon slipped them out the back way and to jail. And it is doubtful if ever the strong bars of a prison seemed so welcome a refuge as those of the Hartford jail did to them.

Things had happened so fast and had taken withal such a serious turn that my brain was in a whirl, and my apprehensions by this time were of a character that left me but little more than a shadow of

the satisfaction that I had experienced in the outset of the new order of things. Those ominous sounds outside, in view of the part Jephtha Allenberry and I had played in making possible the mob spirit now in evidence, were well calculated to dissipate much of the feeling of elation that I had experienced. For albeit I had from the mere human standpoint good cause to hate them and to wish both of them all manner of harm and the most terrifying experiences, I nevertheless deprecated anything like that which might happen to them from that deeply incensed, howling mob as a result of the thing that Jephtha had caused them to be accused of.

And knowing Jephtha as I did, I of course knew that he would share these feelings with me, only in a more intense way, on account of the greater part he had played in bringing about the conditions that made possible such a climax as my fancy had painted, obtaining its colors from those dark and sinister sounds outside there.

He had not foreseen, of course, any more than I, the serious consequences now apparently threatening the two men. His idea had merely been so to implicate them in the practice of so-called witchcraft as not only to destroy their influence against my fiancée, but to force them to employ their meddlesome wits and energies in their own defense rather than against her. But now it began to look as if he were going to have to exercise his own ingenuity to save them.

However, they were safe for the present at least,

as it was scarcely probable that an assault would be made on the jail with the purpose of taking them out and wreaking vengeance on them, as had seemed to be the desire. And with this slightly consoling thought, I resumed my journey toward Captain Crandal's house, hoping in the meantime that Eben Sawter, on account of the present state of feeling and the ominous demonstrations that he had just witnessed, would postpone the service of the writ until the morrow.

This proved a vain hope, however. For I had been there less than half an hour when he made his appearance, and in less than an hour from the time that I had left his Majesty's justice, I was back there again, having made one of the little company of six that had filed along the street thither, of which my fiancée (now formally under arrest) was the central figure. The other members of the little company consisted of her father and mother, and my own father, and Eben Sawter, the constable, who was kind and considerate enough to take a position at the tail of the little procession instead of availing himself of his official prerogative of walking beside my fiancée and of conducting her into his honor's presence, thus affording me the place beside her, a tacit arrangement of which I, of course, availed myself, and an exhibition of regard for our feelings that won him our unstinted gratitude.

Squire Wyllys received us courteously, and treated Miss Crandal in particular with such marked con-

sideration that another draft upon our gratitude was immediately forthcoming, and was ungrudgingly honored by us. He even condescended to jest a little with me, by way of putting me at my ease, I think, saying, among other things, that it would be fine weather for trailing Indians, especially if the chase led through the swamplands and frozen marshes. For although possessed of the dignity and that degree of sober-mindedness that we naturally expect in a justice of the peace, he was not so burdened with gravity that he could not indulge in, and enjoy, a bit of humor now and then. In fact, he was noted as much for his dry wit and a habit that he had of playing pranks on his friends as he was for his legal acumen.

But, as a usual thing, it is not through the memory of his humorous sayings and doings that a man's name is projected into the future. Therefore, if the name of the Honorable Samuel Wyllys should chance to be perpetuated to the extent of finding a place in the history of his country, it will happen as a result of the incident that made him the accidental, or rather the indirect, custodian of Connecticut's Charter, which, as previously intimated, was concealed in a large hollow oak tree, the title to which reposed in him.

Happily, the crowd whose angry clamor had so frightened the preacher and Ezra Walton and caused them to welcome the jail as a refuge had scattered and gone before we reached there, and my

fiancée was therefore spared a spectacle that must have been more or less terrifying to her. For nothing, meseems, is more horrifying to, and trying on, the nerves of a gentle and refined nature than a motley crowd of madly incensed men, rioting and clamoring for the life-blood of a fellow-man.

CHAPTER XXI

The room that Squire Wyllys used for holding his courts of inquiry and for sitting in cases over which a magistrate has jurisdiction, was the left one of the two front rooms of his domicile, each of which opened directly upon the street, with a broad stone step to ease the ascent and descent between doorsill and pavement, after the fashion of all houses there in Hartford that abutted upon the street.

A fire of large hickory sticks, in keeping with the extremely low temperature of the day, glowed in the great wide fireplace, giving to the room a warmth and feeling of comfort in marked contrast to the weather outside. His honor placed chairs and invited us to seat ourselves about the heap of glowing logs, and otherwise sought in his courteous and hospitable way to make us as comfortable and as much at ease as the nature of our presence there would allow.

Then, after giving us reasonable time in which to "thaw out," as he expressed it, he broached the matter that was naturally uppermost in our minds. This he did by saying simply that he felt sure that we were not prepared to have him enter into an investigation of the charges that afternoon, and for

that reason, if we desired it, he would fix the time for the inquisition to begin at ten o'clock on the day after the morrow, which would be Monday. And in lieu of bond for Miss Crandal's appearance at the time named, he would accept her simple pledge to that effect. This she of course gave without hesitancy, and not without some show of emotion at his unexpected kindness.

Soon after escorting her back to her home I returned to Jephtha Allenberry's room again, for the purpose of talking over with him matters relative to the approaching inquiry, and of formulating plans for conducting the defense. For notwithstanding I felt the prosecution had been considerably weakened by the arrest and incarceration of the minister and Ezra Walton, yet there was a dread of the possible result, which not even thoughts of the little influence that they might now wield, nor the optimism of Jephtha, could banish.

And albeit Jephtha Allenberry was no lawyer, so far as I or any one else there knew, yet he had nevertheless impressed me during our frequent discussions of the case as a man with a clear head and good judgment where law points were involved. Besides, it was something of a relief to be with one that had proved himself such a staunch friend.

He happened not to be in his room when I got there, but feeling reasonably sure that he would return soon, I seated myself to await him. And thus seated before a fire, made unusually bright and

cheerful by the hickory sticks that he had had the forethought to pile on before going out, I fell to reviewing the happenings of the last three or four days, from the well simulated fit of the pestiferous Walton child to the yet more effective fraud practiced by Jephtha Allenberry only a few hours before, and wondering what was to be the outcome. And while so cogitating and awaiting Jephtha's return I happened to remember that I had not seen Roland Wadsworth nor Owassa since the evening before, a thing so unusual, particularly as regarded my friend Roland, that I was beginning to wonder what had become of them when, as if in answer to the thought, they suddenly appeared in the room before me. They both seemed exceedingly tired, especially Roland, judging from the sigh of relief with which he dropped into the nearest chair, while Owassa showed scarcely less satisfaction at the opportunity for rest.

When I had somewhat recovered from the surprise occasioned by their unexpected appearance there in the flesh in the selfsame instant that they had come into my thoughts, I was on the point of asking for an explanation relative to their absence and their tired and bedraggled aspect, when I was warned by a look from Roland, which I readily interpreted to mean that, whatever the cause, those in the adjoining room there must not get an inkling of it.

Then drawing his chair close to mine, and speaking in low, well guarded tones, Roland said:

"On my way home last night, about ten o'clock, I discovered the old Guinea woman, Candy, crouched before the front door of her master, Ezra Walton, with her ear to the hole of the latch-string, apparently eavesdropping.

"Curious to know why she should be eavesdropping her master and dame, or any one else, for that matter, I drew near and stopped with the idea of waiting and speaking to her after her curiosity had been satisfied. Thereupon she looked round and, recognizing me, hobbled to my side and whispered in that difficult lingo of hers:

" 'Mas' Rolan', de cause o' dat debil trick played on Mis' Cran'al by dat li'l imp, Sap'ira Wal'on, am right in dah dis minit, abusin' an' a-fussin' at 'em 'bout takin' de hund'ed poun', he say he gib 'em, an' den not goin' on an' gittin Mis' Cran'al 'rested, lak dey 'greed to. Yessuh, he at de bottom ob it all, an' Can'y des lak t' git dese 'ere han's on he win'-pipe fuh des one good minit, an' see he eyes roll, an' he tongue loll out, lak she mek 'em twell he daid, daid, daid!' she concluded with a low, awe-inspiring, guttural sound, her hands meanwhile working convulsively, as if she were already in the act of throttling him.

" 'And who is this man, Candy, who you think is at the bottom of Miss Crandal's trouble?' I asked, though feeling sure that I already knew whom she meant.

" 'Me not know he name,' she replied, with grow-

ing agitation, 'but dis mek two time he bin heah. Look in de latch'ole dah, an' mebbly yo' know,' she commanded, clutching my arm none too tenderly and pushing me toward the door.

"And albeit the thought of complying with her suggestion was resisted by such scruples as would intervene when one is so tempted, I nevertheless waived them, and put my eye to the latch-string hole and peered into the room. There was no light in the room except that afforded by the fitful blaze in the fireplace, yet this was sufficient to disclose the satanic features of Lieutenant Highland, as I had known it would.

"When I withdrew my eye from the hole and looked around I became well-nigh stupefied at the apparent transformation in the appearance of the old Guinea woman. From the little old, crumpled-up, wizen-faced, decrepid-looking black hag she seemed to have been transformed into a very giantess, with the malice in her looks and strength in her form of a thousand furies.

"At the moment I looked around she had her face turned up to the full moon, her arms extended to their full length, palms upward, her long, black, talon-like fingers outspread and working convulsively, muttering some strange, barbaric invocation in a tone so drear and sepulchral withal it made my flesh creep.

"And when she had concluded this weird, uncanny rite she turned back to me with the arbitrary air

of a queen and the mien of a devil incarnate, and said:

“‘Go on yo’ way now quick, man, ’fo’ it’s too late, an’ yo’ life’s squelched out, ’nstid o’ dat debil’s de sperut’s done gi’ me powuh t’ choke twel he’s daid, daid, daid!’

“And although I felt that I would not be any more in her hands than a kitten in a lion’s clutch, I was nevertheless being restrained from heeding her well meant admonition and taking to my heels, less, I am sure, from a feeling of courage than from a sense of the shame it would entail, when a slight commotion in the house warned me that the renegade was getting ready to come out, and therefore if I did not want to be found there and suspected of eavesdropping, I had better be going. Hence, I turned and walked rapidly away.

“But when I reached the corner, near Mrs. O’Meary’s house, I stopped and looked back. Just then I saw Lieutenant Highland step from the door, and in that same instant the black form of the Guinea woman sprung from its crouching position beside the door on to his back and fastened its long, ghoulish fingers about his throat just as the door closed behind him.

“She had managed to spring upon him from behind and sink her fingers into his throat before he was aware she was there. And so firm and unyielding was her clasp, he was unable to utter a sound.

"And then began such a struggle on his part as I had never seen, nor ever expect to see again.

"In every way possible he sought to loosen her hold on his throat, or to shake her from his back. But for all he could unclasp her fingers, they might as well have been a band of steel riveted there. And for all he could shake that form loose from his back, so long as its long, talon-like fingers were buried in the white flesh of his throat, and its feet thrown forward and locked in front of him, it might as well have been a part of himself in the shape of a great abnormal growth, destined to sap his life-blood.

"And still no sound, except a low, horrible gurgle, or wheezing gasp, as his breath grew shorter, the while he was slowly but surely yielding to the awful thing that was drawing his head and shoulders backward in spite of all he could do, big and strong though he was.

"Then presently, just as you have seen a great tree waver and sway as the woodman's ax was being driven deeper and deeper into its heart ere, with a last seeming effort to right itself and maintain its equilibrium, it yielded to the inevitable and pitched headlong to the earth, even so swayed and wavered he in his effort to maintain himself against the thing that was dragging him backward, ere his knees doubled under him, and he fell, while she swung herself to one side and knelt upon his breast, all

without for an instant relinquishing her grip on his throat.

"During the struggle he had staggered backward in a way that carried him close to where I stood on the corner. Therefore when he fell upon his back the moonlight enabled me to see clearly the horribly distorted face, showing his eyes protruding, as it were, from their sockets, and his tongue lolling in a way that seemed to delight and enhance the blood-lust of the fiend that possessed her, judging from the tone of exultation perceptible in the unintelligible jargon in which she gloated as she knelt there upon his breast, kneading and twisting her fingers yet deeper into the white flesh of his now thoroughly exposed throat.

"For a time I was wholly unable to move, being spellbound, it would seem, by the unusual and horrible spectacle. But now, as I suddenly realized that she was bent on finishing what she had so successfully begun, I came out of my stupefaction, ran forward and, by what seemed nothing less than superhuman strength, I wrenched her fingers loose from his throat and hurled her to one side, where she doubled up in a heap, once again the crumpled, decrepid thing of yore.

"At first I thought he was already dead. The form was limp, the eyes set and staring horribly, like one who had died conscious of the fearful thing that was hurrying him to his doom, and realizing his powerlessness to prevent it.

"And, believing him dead, I awoke to the consciousness of what might be the consequence to me, should I be found there beside him at that hour of the night, and was starting away when I saw a form emerge from the shadow of Mrs. O'Meary's house and start toward me.

"This proved to be Owassa, who, it developed, had seen the renegade enter the town, and had shadowed him to the Walton home, and—"

At this point we were interrupted by the uncere-
monious entrance of Silas Graham from the adjoining room, and Roland was forced to postpone the conclusion to another time.

CHAPTER XXII

Hartford had two places of public entertainment, or taverns, as we usually called them, which could justly lay claim to respectability, and at either of which the weary traveler might reasonably expect to be served with wholesome diet and a comfortable bed, and where, it went without saying, he was sure of beer, wine, or of strong drink that never fell below the standard enjoined by law, on penalty of losing their license, and at a cost not to exceed two pence the ale quart for the first named beverage, on pain of three shillings and four pence, made and provided for every such offense, nor more than eight pence the quart profit on wine, or strong water, which either his natural thirst for the like or his travel-worn condition might lead him to consume, on penalty of twenty shillings forfeiture for the overcharge.

The two taverns thus alluded to stood across the intersection of the two main streets from each other. Each was provided with large public rooms, furnished with benches and stools for the comfort and convenience of the wayfarer, occasional lounge, and habitual inn-haunter, and likewise with a great wide fireplace for heating and rendering the room com-

fortable in the winter. This fireplace became the receptacle for wild honeysuckle, boughs of redbud, or of other flowering bushes in the early spring-time, and of evergreens in summer-time.

Upon almost any chilly evening in the fall, and invariably during the long winter evenings, one was sure to find from ten to twenty or more men gathered in either of the public rooms of these two inns, with the great heap of hickory or sugar tree logs in the fireplace, casting a bright or mellow glow over the scene, quiet, or animated, according to the degree or extent of their potations, which, however, were not allowed to attain to anything like excess after nine o'clock at night.

The appellations by which these two places of public entertainment were designated were not greatly dissimilar, except as to sound, their names being "The Spotted Fawn" and "The Red Deer," respectively, and patronage was so equally divided between the two that no one might truthfully say that this one or that had the better of it.

And although it had been my habit to drop in at one or the other of these taverns almost every night, for the purpose of spending an hour or so with friends and acquaintances, yet for reasons that it is easy enough for the reader to understand, it had now been several evenings since I had been at either hostelry. But, on the evening succeeding the events contained in the last two or three chapters, Roland Wadsworth and I met by agreement at "The Spotted

Fawn." Thither I was accompanied by Owassa, whom I had made my guest at my father's house for that night, or for such time as it might suit his whim to wander back into the forests to mingle with his kind. And albeit the customs and accommodations of civilization accorded not well with his wild nature, which liked not and could ill brook its trammels, yet his manner of speech and general decorum when he chanced to be brought under its restraints were anything but unpleasant, being inspired, it would seem, by that innate sense of the fitness of things peculiar to the more noble-minded in any walk or condition of life.

On this particular evening the public room of "The Spotted Fawn" was patronized by the usual average, except that a goodly number of those enjoying the delectable warmth and cheerful glow of the big log-fire were guests rather than mere loungers and inn-haunters, two or three of them strangers, bearing upon their garments, from well bedraggled hose to more or less bespattered doublet and cloak, the travel stains incident to a winter journey over roads rendered doubly tedious and difficult at this time by ice in all the "narrows," all streams being frozen over, in many instances hardly sufficient to bear up the combined weight of man and beast.

Taken as a whole, it was an assemblage typical of the times and the place, when and where one might reasonably expect to encounter types of each and every character peculiar to the various social ranks,

from the near royal to the plebeian-blooded, with all the intervening gradations, yet with never an intimation from those possessed of the nobler strains that they thought themselves better than those less fortunate in that particular, an exhibition of repressed pride and self-restraint very much to their credit.

The landlord of "The Spotted Fawn" was replenishing the fire in the public room when we entered, while his wife was perched upon a high stool, just back of the short counter over which the various beverages of the hostelry were served when called for, busily plying the needles in the sock she was engaged in knitting and occasionally throwing a word over her shoulders into the conversation carried on around the huge fireplace, gathered in a semicircle about which were all the other occupants of the room except four or five who were at a table over in one corner. There two played at a game of draughts and the others looked on, as deeply interested as if they themselves were playing.

The frequenters of "The Spotted Fawn" all knew, and strangers could easily perceive, that the landlady was by many odds the dominant half of the combination owning and operating it. The husband, Sandy Cunningham, was a meek-mannered little man, with hair and eyebrows of that indescribable hue peculiar to a putty-like complexion. He moved about with a catlike tread, and always with the air of one who is ever on the alert for a com-

mand from his better half, whose mandates experience had taught him must be obeyed at all hazards.

His wife was a comely little body, with smooth, well turned features, set off by a pair of rosy cheeks and captivating little dimples that never failed to respond to the smile with which she was wont to part on the slightest occasion. And albeit her voice was a bit high-pitched, it was not an unpleasant one, being rarely without the ring of merriment that her bluish-gray eyes forever reflected, even when affecting to scold the easy-going husband and apparently trying to put a sharp edge on her words, which, while they never failed to make him move with alacrity, seemed not to pierce over deep, or to produce a wound that a smile or a cooing little word from her could not instantly heal.

And just as he took orders from his wife and obeyed with a haste that seemed to evince that he found pleasure in it, even so he received orders from his guests and executed them to the best of his ability, if not with the same degree of despatch that he manifested in responding to his wife's commands, yet with that degree of pleasure at least that the promised or prospective recompense, added to the score for their entertainment, justified.

At no time had any one familiar with the management of the tavern ever known him to lose his temper, or resent by word or act the tone in which an order had been given him. Hence the unfeigned, open-mouthed wonder with which something that oc-

curred there on that particular evening was received by those present and familiar with the seemingly impregnable good-nature of the hitherto humble and subservient landlord of "The Spotted Fawn."

Both Roland and I had sought to prevail upon Jephtha Allenberry to meet with us there at "The Spotted Fawn" that evening, but to no avail. His excuse for not doing so (preceded by a sly wink, and given for the express benefit of Silas Graham, who was still in the room) being to the effect that the ordeal through which he had passed had unfitted him for enjoying an evening out. And so, pretending to recognize the propriety, if not the prudence likewise, of exercising a show of reticency and seclusion, we desisted and went our way, leaving him to the solitude that his false pretensions bespoke.

My reception at "The Spotted Fawn" by such of my old acquaintances as chanced to be there was reasonably cordial, because, possibly, the chief incident of the day had served to shift from me to the preacher and Ezra Walton a measure of the odium that I had acquired in their estimation by reason of my relations to Miss Crandal.

Even the landlord in his meek, shy way had vouchsafed me a welcome, while his wife, looking up from her knitting, gave me a hearty nod by way of showing her good-will. And then, after carefully adjusting her knitting-needles as if to prevent a dropped stitch, and smoothing out the sock that she was engaged on, she turned upon her stool and said:

"We were just talking as you came in, Marc, about the affliction of Jephtha Allenberry this afternoon at the hands of the minister and Ezra Walton, and I will now say what was on the end o' my tongue to say as you came in. This was to the effect that if the people had paid half as much attention to what they were pleased to call the jabberings of the old Guinea woman as they did to that little mischief-maker, Sappie Walton, they would not have been so ready to fall in with the designs of Ira Jones in his efforts to create a feeling and sentiment against that poor young lady. It is all only too apparent now why they were so anxious to fasten a charge of witchcraft against her, which was nothing more nor less than to divert suspicion from themselves, as any one with even half a mind can understand.

"And now that the people's eyes have been opened to what's what, and who are the real and actual familiars of the devil among us, it'll be a wonder to me if they don't pay the penalty with their lives, and as they ought to, from what I have heard about the way they tortured poor Jephtha Allenberry."

At this point the click of the wooden latch of the door, followed the next instant by a puff of cold air, drew all eyes in that direction, to the entrance of a tall, heavily bearded, muscular man, bearing upon a stick across his shoulder a bundle of no small proportions.

When he had abruptly closed the door behind him he turned and greeted us in the following de-

cidedly vehement, irreverent, and informal manner, to wit:

"To hell with such stinging cold weather! To hell with such roads as you have hereabouts! To hell with your ice-covered streams, frozen over just enough to get one's confidence and then let him through into the chilling waters!"

By this time he had reached the counter, to which he turned his back and allowed the bundle to slip from the stick over his shoulder on to it. Then facing about and addressing the landlady where she sat on the stool back of the counter, he said:

"I beg your pardon, madam! Had I been aware of your presence a moment sooner, I would have been more choice of my language, and nominated a place of less fervent temperature to which to consign the objects of my aversion."

Then, addressing Sandy, the landlord, who, in the meantime had sidled up to the vicinity of his wife's perch, he blustered out:

"And you, sir, I take it are the landlord? If so, bestir thyself and make preparations for my entertainment."

To this Sandy vouchsafed no reply other than a glance at his wife, by way possibly of conveying to the stranger the idea that all rights to the title implied were invested in her, and that therefore any negotiations for entertainment and lodging at "The Spotted Fawn" must be carried on with her.

"Why the devil don't you answer me, Mr. Putty-

face? I am too travel-worn and hungry to be trifled with, and therefore in no mood for pantomime. Wherefore, if you do not bestir yourself instantly with a view to my proper entertainment, with victuals and a beverage strong enough to hold its own with the devil that is in me to-night, then harkee, sir, and know that I will make you feel the weight of this cudgel across those precious shoulders of yours!" Saying which, he tapped the landlord (now abjectly cowering against the background of bottles, demijohns, and mugs) none too lightly on the back with the stick he had in his hand.

So singular and altogether different had been both the speech and the manner of the stranger from anything that we had ever seen or heard, or that even the most imaginative and erratic romancer might have conjured up for the entertainment of a casual and diverse assemblage such as that, we were all rendered dumb and motionless with wonder and surprise.

CHAPTER XXIII

Notwithstanding our amazement at the cavalier words and bullying manner of the burly stranger was such as to render us incapable of that sense or feeling of indignation that such unseemly arrogance and manifestations of bravado always provoke, it was nevertheless as a mere drop in the bucket compared with what we were destined to experience within the next few seconds through the hitherto meek and inoffensive landlord's marvelous display of courage and daring.

For no sooner had he righted himself from the cowering attitude into which the menacing action of the stranger had driven him and caught sight of the pitying sneer that his lack of spirit had called to his wife's lips, than he straightened himself up to his diminutive stature of five-foot-six, thrust out his abnormally flat chest by some trick of inflation, or muscular action, till it protruded like a pouter's, and then strutting 'round the end of the counter and up to the very toes of the other, he pushed his face up as near the great broad, bearded one above him as his stature would allow, and then hissed up toward it:

"Have a care, Master Bully, whose b-back you

threaten, or I'll—I'll,—why, sir, I'll scratch your eyes out o' your head! D'ye hear me, sir? I tell you to your very teeth, sir, I'll claw your eyes out o' your head! My wife there knows how very spiteful I am when I get riled like this, and these people all know what a fiend I am on such occasions!"

Thereupon the stranger laid his stick on the counter, and then, leaning forward and dropping his hands upon his knees, proceeded to peer into the little fellow's face with an air of the deepest curiosity. Then, after a moment or so of this well feigned curiosity, during which the landlord shifted from one foot to the other and turned his head this way and that, with a pitiful look of helplessness, he cautiously extended one hand and commenced timidously to stroke the little man's pea-green doublet, lisping meanwhile, "Kitty! kitty! Poor 'ittle kitty wants a mousie."

"Harkee, sir!" piped the landlord, taking one little step backward, and thrusting his hands down into his trowsers pockets, "harkee, sir, and don't try to shame me here before my wife and all these people, or 'pon my word I'll spit in your face. D'ye hear me, Master Braggart? I say I'll spit in your face!"

"Upon my word, gentlemen," said the stranger, straightening up and glancing around with an air of deep concern, "I verily believe it is the most spiteful little feline I have ever come across. It ought not to be allowed to run at large, when the

guests of this hostelry would be so much safer if it were confined in a cage. Madam," he said, turning to the landlady, "haven't you some way of confining it until after my departure on the morrow? I assure you that I am very much concerned for my safety, and——"

But he got no further. For at that moment Owassa, who, at the very first sound of his voice, had raised up from the squatting position that he had assumed over near one corner of the room when we entered there, and had, all unperceived by any of us, been edging his way gradually toward him, stepped quickly forward and grabbed the fellow in the dark, bushy whiskers with one hand, and in the hair with the other. Then he leaped backward and held up to view a wig and a false beard, thus leaving petrified in his tracks, as it were, and exposed to the bewildered gaze of all none other than Lieutenant Highland, the renegade.

Only for an instant, however, stood he speechless and motionless, ere, with inconceivable swiftness, he snatched his sword from its place of concealment somewhere beneath his cloak. Then, with the exclamation, "You damned imp of hell!" he sprang forward and made a thrust at Owassa's breast.

But the Indian's quick eye and aboriginal nimbleness enabled him to evade the mad thrust, while the momentum resulting from the wild, impetuous lunge of the renegade carried him sufficiently past his intended victim to enable the latter to grasp him

from behind and pinion his arms in a vise-like grip to his sides. The next moment he had lifted him clear off his footing and flung him with violent force upon the floor. In a twinkling he was astride of him, with his long, keen hunting-knife gleaming in the firelight above his breast. For a moment the gleaming blade hung poised directly over the heart of the erstwhile burly-looking bully, as if its wielder would prolong for a few seconds the agony of his intended victim. Then, taken suddenly with the diabolical idea of scalping the living man, Owassa leaned forward, seized him by a lock of his hair, and was just in the act of applying the keen-edged knife, with the quick, circular stroke used by the Indian in effecting this purpose, when I recovered my wits sufficiently to spring forward and arrest his hand just as the edge of the knife touched the scalp.

I then persuaded him to allow Highland to get up, without doing him further harm, notwithstanding I should have liked nothing better than to kill him myself, if only I could have had the excuse of nothing more than sudden heat and passion wherewith to appease my conscience, and to that extent justify an otherwise cold-blooded deed.

Allowed to regain his feet, apparently no worse for his misadventure than the humiliation and hurt to his pride through his exposure and defeat by Owassa, he scowled viciously at the latter, then at me, then at the others in the room, stooped and picked up his sword and head-piece from the floor, grabbed

his stick and bundle from the counter, and then slunk out into the frigid night, to fare none knew nor cared whither.

As soon as the door closed behind him I began to cast about in my mind for a cause for his disguise. But the search for a solution proved a vain one, and I had to content myself with the one and only evident fact, to wit: That under the semblance of a burly, bewhiskered, and exceedingly tough cavalier he had hoped to conceal his identity while effecting, or seeking to effect, the thing that had brought him there. But what that thing or purpose was constituted a veritable puzzle. That it was something dark and devilish, however,—something inimical to the interest and well-being of Miss Crandal,—went without quibble or question in my mind. Otherwise, I felt, he would have appeared openly and in his true character, which was bad enough and tough enough, God knows, not only in my estimation, but in the opinion of everybody in Hartford.

I was greatly surprised, too, at seeing him at all so soon after his experience with the old Guinea negro, which, as the reader will remember, had been only the night before. Yet my surprise was nothing to compare with Roland's, who naturally supposed, from his thorough familiarity with the circumstance, that the ordeal through which he had passed was enough to restrain him for the time being at least from attempting anything of an adventurous kind. For Roland declared that when he and Owassa, after

his resuscitation, had assisted him to, and placed him on, the horse that he had left hitched in a secluded place on the outer edge of town, he seemed so helpless and sat the horse so unsteadily that they had had some misgivings as to whether he would be able to maintain his seat in the saddle until he should reach the point down the river where, on account of the ice, he told them, he had left his boat.

However, I suppose that innate meanness has some such saving effect on those saturated with it as strong drink has on one whose excessive potations have rendered him in a measure helpless, in which condition he seems immune from harm, insomuch that a jolt sufficient to kill a sober man, even to a fall from a housetop, leaves him no worse for his experience. For the writer once knew a drunken man, whose antipathy to the Red Cross on his majesty's colors induced him to climb to the top of a very tall building, from which—But then that were scarcely pertinent to this narrative.

However, as there was never yet riddle so deep that some one to whom it came did not, by some hook or crook, manage to find the key to its solution, even to the extreme of plowing with its author's heifer, it followed that I was not left long in ignorance of the purpose for which the renegade had taken the precaution to disguise himself in the manner shown. For it chanced that Owassa, during the confusion following the exposure and its somewhat tragic sequel, found upon the floor of the public room,

where it had fallen from one of Lieutenant Highland's pockets, a letter that he had written and addressed, and had not yet despatched, to Sir Edmund Andros.

It happened that this letter had not yet been sealed, and while I will not lay myself liable to the charge of insincerity by saying that if it had been sealed I would not have broken it open for the purpose of availing myself of its contents, yet I can, in all candor, say that I experienced some scruples at the thought of reading it. However, these misgivings were speedily thrust aside, less out of deference, I fear, to the adage that anything is fair in love or war than to a pressing curiosity to fathom the mystery of the disguise.

But, on account of its length, I am under the necessity of referring the reader to the next chapter for a transcript of it and the revelations to which it led.

CHAPTER XXIV

It was still early when Roland, Owassa, and I left the public room of "The Spotted Fawn" that night.

No one had seen Owassa pick up the letter that had fallen from Lieutenant Highland's pocket, not even I, so intently were all eyes fixed upon the rage-distorted face of the discomfited man. Neither did any one see him hand it to me just as the crestfallen one slunk out of the door into the biting chill of the moonlit night, his cheeks less prepared for the clinging kisses of the frost-tempered wind than when he had arrived. For then his face and head had been concealed beneath the bushy black beard and the wig of which Owassa had so quickly and adroitly relieved him.

We had remained in the public room of "The Spotted Fawn" only a few minutes after the renegade's hasty and ignoble exit, yet, notwithstanding the bright moonlight afforded us a clear view in all directions, we saw nothing of him when we came out, and so decided that he had crossed over to, and procured entertainment and lodging at, "The Red Deer."

We separated at the next corner north, Roland saying that he would go directly home, and Owassa

that he would go for an hour's visit with an old Mohecan, who had his wigwam on the outskirts of the town, and then return to pass the night at our house on his blanket before the fire in my room, which constituted a couch and corresponding comforts that no Indian would exchange for the downiest bed in the land.

Left to myself, I decided that, as it was something like two hours yet till my regular bedtime, I would not go home for a while, and instead would go to Jephtha's room and regale him with an account of Highland's appearance at "The Spotted Fawn," and the real, if not nearly tragic, tableau presented when Owassa would have scalped the living man.

And thus, as fate would have it, I went for the third time that day to the house where Jephtha lived. Nor is this reference to fate without a degree of significance when considered in connection with the revelations contained in the aforesaid letter, which I was enabled to read by the bright light afforded by the exceedingly rich pineknot Jephtha was so thoughtful as to thrust in between forestick and backlog, as the reader will agree when I shall have made known its contents.

It will be recalled presumably by those that have had the patience to pursue these memoirs thus far that it is recorded of Jephtha Allenberry that he had come to Hartford from Jamestown, in the Province of Virginia, and that rumor had mixed him up in a love-affair there, which had had something to do

with his leaving that place and settling in Hartford some three years before the beginning of the events set forth in these memoirs. But I do not think that I mentioned that, along with this rumor, had come hints of a darker nature, yet withal so vague and intangible that they were regarded as wholly visionary, insomuch that no one had ever sought, or even thought, so far as I am aware, to inquire into the matter. We accepted him for what he appeared to be, and were satisfied. If he had had a past that did not comport with what we knew of him, what of it? Many a man with an unsavory past had outlived it, and had become model men.

Of course I had not the remotest idea when I opened and commenced to read that letter there in his presence that it contained anything concerning him, or I would have sought the seclusion of my own room instead to read it and learn what was otherwise revealed to me there in his.

However, once I had accidentally come upon this hitherto unknown chapter in his past, I felt that it was my duty to let him read the letter also, that he might be prepared for that at which it hinted, were the would-be blackmailer not now barred from attempting to carry out his purpose by the unexpected exposure of his identity, to say nothing of his subsequent discovery of the loss of the letter giving the details of his nefarious scheme, which he could not but assume some one must find and read.

And that the reader may understand whereof I

have been thus vaguely hinting, the following transcript of said letter is submitted in satisfaction of such curiosity as the foregoing references thereto may have aroused:

“To the Honourable,
The Governor General,
And Vice Admiral of
New England, New York,
And the Jerseys,—

“Right Worthy Syr:

“Though I like not the idea of settling down for an epistolary talk, because of the painstaking effort which any form of composition entails, yet I find myself so circumstanced that it behooves me to swallow my dislike of the same with such grace and placidity of countenance as the relish that a purpose to undeceive you touching one thing, and a desire to confide in you relative to another, will enable me to, and indite an epistle of such brevity as a due regard to perspicuity and the matter to be treated of will allow.

“And that the least pleasant part of the task I have taken my pen in hand to perform may be consummated as speedily as possible, and done with, I enter upon it with the prefatory observation that, notwithstanding I make no pretence of a lively conscience, and lay no claim to any exalted sense of honor (as some of the missions I have undertaken at your behest have already shown you), I am never-

theless constrained by something, I know not what (unless by that more or less irresistible impulse wherewith the criminal is sometimes seized to boast of his achievements), to inform you that I have thus far deceived you as to my name and true identity, and consequently as to my antecedents. Wherefore, most worthy syr, it very naturally follows that my name is not Highland, and therefore that I am not the son of your deceased friend, Sir Richard Highland, as you had so fondly believed me to be.

“As already stated, I know not by what I have been led to make this disclosure, unless by some such thing as that given in the second parenthesis, superinduced, possibly, by the confidence you have from time to time reposed in me anent your schemes for enriching yourself at the expense of those whom your commission from his Majesty placed at your mercy.

“Anyway, I know this has had much to do in bringing me to confide the following incident in my life to you, as likewise my true name, and the scheme I am now upon the eve of attempting to carry through, by way of making certain the conviction of the haughty maid that had the temerity to spurn my suit, of the which you are fully cognizant.

“Prior to the beginning of our acquaintance, and the subsequent relations we came to bear toward each other of something akin to protégé and patron, I was known in Jamestown, in the Province of Virginia, as Paul Wyland.

"In the same town was a young practitioner of the law of the name of Jephtha Allen, and my senior by a year or such a matter, and he and I paid court to the same maid. But she, being addicted to a love of coquetry, kept us both on the anxious seat, as the saying goes, insomuch that neither of us was ever sure of his place in her heart. And as each very naturally laid his trouble at the other's door, it followed that the feeling between us grew very bitter.

"I never really cared for her as I felt he did, yet persevered in my attentions out of pure mischief, or a spirit of deviltry, as you will, merely to spite and worry him.

"Then, when I at last perceived that he was getting the better of me in her good graces, I planned to compromise her by means of a forged letter, purporting to be from her to me, and then drop it where he should be sure to get it.

"My scheme worked even better than I had hoped, yet the result was anything but what I had expected, else I might have hesitated about putting it to the test. For he immediately sought me in person and challenged me to a most unique combat to the death, to which there were to be no seconds, and consequently no witnesses nor attendants of any kind.

"His challenge imposed the condition that we should meet two nights hence upon the river, at the uncanny hour of midnight, each in a canoe, which we should lash together, and then with only such

weapons as God had vouchsafed us at birth, grapple and struggle for the mastery.

"And notwithstanding the odd conditions imposed, I accepted his challenge, seeing not how I could do otherwise and maintain the reputation for courage and prowess that I had managed to acquire during my sojourn there. The result was that we met there on the river in the manner stipulated, and I cannot recall having ever seen a more beautiful moonlit summer night than this one proved to be.

"It had been agreed that each of us should give out to his friends and acquaintances (for neither of us had any relatives thereabouts) that he was going to leave Jamestown the afternoon preceding the night in question to return no more, and likewise stipulated that if either of us survived the struggle, he was never to appear there again. By this arrangement our absence would be accounted for, and no suspicion of the tragedy ever aroused.

"Just as our canoes came side to side, and we were making ready to lash them securely together in preparation for the death struggle, we thought we saw a man dodge behind a tree on the opposite side of the river from the town. We decided it was some skulking Indian, and so gave it no more thought while fastening our barques together, each with such a show of indifference as to the outcome as he was able to summon to his aid under the circumstances.

"It is not my purpose to comment upon the sensations that I experienced there in that lonely mid-

night struggle on the moonlit waters of the river, with no footing except such as our frail, tilting, swaying barques afforded, and from which both of us knew one or the other of us must topple to his death and a bed on the bottom of the river, if not both.

"Ah, that struggle! I shudder even now at the very memory of it! He seemed a very giant in strength, a veritable boa-constrictor for suppleness and the crushing power of his long, corded arms. For although I was his equal in size, and considered by my friends a very strong and active young fellow, yet I was in no sense a match for Jephtha Allen. Verily, it appeared as if he wound himself about me, as a python winds itself about its prey! Only too quickly after we came together did I realize my utter helplessness in his hands, and how foolish it had been of me to accept his challenge to such a combat.

"In the very outset he managed to wind his arms about me in such a way that he was able to twist me around until he had my back to him. Then he managed to get a grip on my left wrist, by which he was enabled, with the crushing pressure he brought to bear upon my right arm, to render me practically helpless, and literally so when he worked his left hand upward until his long, muscular fingers contracted about my throat. Thereupon he commenced forcing my head backward until he was enabled to grin down into my horrified eyes with

some such a look of malevolence as the devil must frequently bend near and bestow upon a specially coveted victim in the moment of dissolution. Then it was that my doom seemed as utterly fixed as if I already lay at the bottom of the river.

"But I had thought not to dwell upon the sensations that I experienced in that all but one-sided struggle, nor shall I further.

"Presently I surmised, rather than felt, that he was preparing to loosen his hold and suddenly heave me overboard, and having yet a little life and presence of mind left, I managed to throw my right hand upward and fasten my fingers in his long, loose flowing hair. Then, with the little strength left in me, I heaved forward, and together we went overboard. The next instant the waters closed over us, and I experienced a thrill of joy at the thought that when, if ever, the river should give up its dead they should find my hand clutched firmly in his hair, and from that be enabled to interpret the tragedy and know the thought of revenge, even in that moment of death, or what verily seemed so.

"But it was not so to be. In some way he wrenched my hand loose from his hair, and separated himself from me, evidently believing me gone. The next moment I came to the surface directly under and between the high, sloping prows of the two canoes. Then reaching up, I caught hold of the edge of one and sustained myself until a measure of strength returned.

“And as I saw nothing more of him, I naturally believed he had perished, and knew not to the contrary, until he, along with other rescuers, dashed into the circle of light cast by our camp-fire that night last fall when I was disguised as one of the Indians who, in accordance with a suggestion from you to me, had at my instigation captured and carried away Captain Crandal, his daughter, and Miss Law, about which and the rescue then and there effected you will remember I told you upon my return to Boston immediately thereafter.

“Subsequently I learned that he had made his home in Hartford ever since that time, under the name of Jephtha Allenberry. Under my disguise as a Narragansett he did not recognize me that night, and, as luck would have it, he had not chanced to see me on the occasion of my only visit to Hartford two or three days before, and is therefore under the impression that I perished that night, just as I had always believed he had until I recognized him on the occasion above stated.

“From information received through a friend in Hartford, he is sure to be a hindrance to the conviction of the one especial mark of my hate for witchcraft. I know him well enough to know that he cannot be bought off. The only hope is to frighten him into becoming an ally, or at least to keep his hands off, by reminding him that I was on the shore that night and saw him kill Paul Wyland, knowing

that he must recall the fact that we had both seen some one there.

"This proposed impersonation of the supposed witness to that affair will be easy enough of accomplishment, I think. At all events I am going to try it, and will let you know results as soon thereafter as I may find a chance to send you a few lines by some trustworthy person, which like opportunity I must bide the time of for getting this into thy hand. For as yet I know not by whose hand I shall be able to send it, or if at all, so many of my plans miscarry of late.

"With the which, and the foregoing, I bid you a kindly adieu, and subscribe myself, most honorable and worthy syr,

"Your humble and obedient servant,

"(Signed) PAUL WYLAND."

CHAPTER XXV

While I was reading this letter (the penmanship of which a sense of fairness constrains me to say was exceptionally good) Jephtha, sitting sideways to the fire so as to get the benefit of the light from the pineknot, seemed wholly absorbed in the musty-looking, well worn book of legal aspect that he was reading. He had laughed heartily enough at my account of the occurrence at "The Spotted Fawn," and he had shown much satisfaction over the miscreant's discomfiture and humiliation, yet had given no indication of curiosity relative to what the letter might reveal, notwithstanding he could not help seeing how curious I was about it, when I told him how it had come into my hands, and also of my intention to read it, in the hope of getting a clue to the purpose of the villian's disguise.

And although that part of it concerning himself was of a mildly startling nature, yet it was easy enough for one as familiar with him as I was to perceive that it was characteristic of him, all except that part that had likened his look of triumph in the last moments of that weird struggle to such a look of malignant exultation as Satan may delight in tantalizing a much coveted victim with, which was in no

sense in keeping with the nature of the man that I and others there knew as Jeptha Allenberry. For although he was a man of rugged and powerful structure, and in some phases of his many-sided character not exactly prepossessing in appearance, yet there had been nothing in his conduct during his sojourn among, and intercourse with, the people of Hartford that would indicate anything even remotely akin to a cruel nature.

Naturally the information thus accidentally obtained relative to his past gave him a new and added interest in my estimation. And as, at the conclusion of the letter, I looked at him where he sat,—deeply engrossed in the book he was reading, and therefore wholly unconscious of the friendly yet curious scrutiny my new interest in him justified, conscious now of the fact that he too had loved as ardently perhaps as I, yet through the villainy of the selfsame devil in human shape that was at the bottom of my present trouble he had been led to believe the mistress of his heart false, and driven by the thought of it to abandon even the locality of her abode,—my heart warmed toward him with a yet more intense glow. For I pitied him. At last, apprised of my gaze by that something that we have all experienced, yet could not account for, he closed his book, perpetrated a prodigious yawn, and asked me what I had learned from the letter that I still held in my hand.

“Several things,” I replied, affecting a tone of

soliloquy, and looking dreamily at the sizzling rosin oozing from the pineknot, as if more interested in it than in the matter I was entering upon, "the first of which is that the name of Highland is an alias, the cause of, or excuse for, his assuming which was evidently twofold. The second thing is that, at a period not very remote from the present, he was challenged to a duel to the death, as the result of a rivalry between himself and another for the affections of a young lady, a very remarkable and ultimate feature of which duel was that each of them left the scene of the combat under the impression that the other had died at his hands. Furthermore, in accordance with an ante-duel compact, neither he nor his antagonist, who until quite recently he verily believed had perished at his hands, as above stated, has ever returned to the place wherein the trouble that led to the duel originated, so far as he had been able to learn to the contrary.

"A striking feature too about this rivalry was the dastardly trick he played upon the young lady and his rival. By a forged letter, purporting to be from the young lady to himself, which he purposely dropped or left where the rival could not fail to find it, he managed to create in his mind a doubt of her constancy, if not of her virtue itself. It was this letter, of course, that led to the duel.

"For a wonder, he was considerate enough not to mention the name of the young lady. This, however, may have been an oversight rather than a de-

sign to shield her, in which case he is not, of course, entitled to the credit hinted at.

"His rival's name, he says, was Allen, and his own, Wyland, if we may believe—"

Here I was interrupted by a heavy, impatient hand upon my shoulder, and the equally impatient words:

"Oh, to the devil and Tom Walker with make-believe dreamy and spiritless monologues! Give me that letter, before I shake you for the ramus you pretend to be!" Thus ejaculating, he snatched the letter from my hand.

Then, giving the pineknot a thrust with his finger which sent it farther in between forestick and log, he dropped back into his chair and fell to devouring its contents with an avidity that showed plainly the absorbing interest that it held for him.

I watched him closely while he read for indications of those emotions that I felt sure would manifest themselves before he got through with it. But if there was the least change or variation from his stern, set expression into which his dark, strongly marked face had settled as he commenced to read, it was not at all perceptible. Slowly he went through the many-worded epistle, as if studying it in order to make sure that there could be no mistake about its contents.

His first remark, after finishing and then fully refolding the letter, was:

"It is an ill wind indeed that blows nobody good. For while he is at this very moment, perhaps

ting and stewing over the loss of this letter, my heart is lighter by many, many pounds for the sight of it, and, strange as it may seem to you, shouting peans and thanksgivings that he did not perish there as I verily believed he had when I took up the burden of the dark secret after I had crept, half exhausted, from the water onto the shore that night and plunged into the forest. Nor had it grown lighter with the flight of time, nor the growing consciousness that he was a villain and richly deserved the fate that, until this minute, I was certain he had suffered, and at my hands."

"Jeptha," I said, "from that letter I have somehow received the impression that you never called upon her after that, much less sought to ascertain if she really wrote the letter purporting to be from her?"

"You are right, Marc," he answered in a sad, regretful tone, "for the reason that the handwriting was such a perfect imitation of hers that I had not the slightest doubt of its genuineness. And believing as I did that she had written it, certain vague references therein, which were susceptible of but one interpretation, made it impossible for me to desire a continuance of the old relations. Hence I could see no reason why I should seek an explanation, or even see her again.

"But now, of course, I can easily see that I should have gone to her with the letter, in which event everything would have been made clear and satisfactory

so far as she was concerned, though I shudder to think of the summary and fell manner in which I should have dealt with him on the spur of the moment. For I loved Anna Fordyce, Marc, as—Well, it were folly, I suppose, to say that I loved her as no other man ever loved a woman, as I was about to, though I really thought so at the time. And I doubt if there was ever a man, who really and truly loved, that did not think that his was the deepest, purest, and sweetest love of any that the fair face of maiden ever inspired in the heart of man, or that his beloved was not possessed of attributes and charms that no other woman had ever been endowed with, at least in the same bountiful manner.

“And such a love, and such a conception of its object, is the only one worth while, and ample enough to hide the proverbial multitude of faults, ignorance of, or obliviousness to, which is necessary to a perfect and lasting happy marriage. For only the man and woman whose love for each other is such as to blind each to the other’s imperfections may hope to go through life together without a jar sufficient to mar their domestic tranquillity.

“Unfortunately too many so-called love matches are unequally balanced. For either the man is over head and ears in love, and is therefore blind to the shortcomings of his heart’s idol, and receives in return indifference, or at most only a half-hearted demonstration of affection, or else it is the woman who discharges her tender obligations with an over-

flowing measure, only to receive a skimpy, lukewarm love in return. And therein lies the secret of much, if not of most, of the connubial infelicity that we hear about. For naturally the one or the other that gives so much, and then receives nothing more than a kind of sugar-coated tolerance in return, becomes fretful and querulous, and soon the rose-bordered way, which young Love had hallowed with his presence and worn smooth by his frequent tender mis-sions to and fro, becomes cluttered with those un-seemly things that disuse and neglect make inevitable, while the one responsible for it has, all unintentionally it may be, prepared a near cut to the place of final and utter dissolution of the bonds that erstwhile bound and made them one.

“Moreover, and saddest of all, they must henceforth tread the separate ways that the folly, or lukewarmness, of the one whose fault it was had wittingly or unwittingly devised, the heart of each forever rent and torn by the memory of the few things from which nothing can divorce them,—the things of which the unfailing, persistent recurrence calls up from their hearts full many a sigh. For such are doomed to be forever haunted by the wistful, sad-visaged ghost of the old love, which returns at unexpected intervals and renews its allegiance in dreams, when pride and the will slumber and are powerless to bar the door of the heart against it. This, too, despite the scene of revelry that they may have sought in the earlier part of the night, in the hope of smothering or of

losing it forever. For there is nothing that can bring back a dead, or a cast out love, like a dream can, and nothing like a dream can invade its sacred haunts and rout a sigh from its hiding-place among our sorrows.

"But what I started out to say was that every one that loves truly feels that way about it, I suppose. Anyway, I do not mind owning that I loved Anna Fordyce passionately, and that I suffered poignantly as a result of that unholy interruption to the course of my love.

"To have the cup dashed from your lips just as you have begun to quaff its unalloyed sweets entails a bitterness that nothing can sweeten, creates in your heart an emptiness that nothing else can fill or satisfy, especially if, as in my case, ambition dies with the dream that had fostered it."

"But, Jephtha, now that you know the truth—know that she did not write that letter, but was the victim of a villainous trick, and therefore not the inconstant and worse thing the spurious letter led you to believe she was, what are you going to do about it?" I asked. "Surely you will go to her at once and seek to make amends for the injustice that you did her in thus allowing yourself to be duped and played upon? Seek, in short, to recover, as it were, the cup that your scarcely warranted credulity enabled him to dash from your lips?"

"If you knew her as I do, Marc, you would readily understand the futility of such a course, the folly

of such a hope, even if she were still free to receive my overtures. She would spurn me, and justly, too, for the imbecile weakness that enabled me to doubt, and then forsake her, unheard. Hence she is really more hopelessly lost to me now than when I thought her the inconstant and guilty thing the spurious letter hinted at, notwithstanding my heart is yearning for her at this moment as never before, and I would make any sacrifice short of honor itself to regain her love."

"Bah, Jephtha! such sentiments are more like the nonsense that the romancer puts into the mouth of his puppets than like the utterances of a real and sensible person. For if she is the sensible, high-minded woman that your word would imply, and cared for you, as such a woman as I have in my mind would have to care for one before pledging herself to him, she would welcome any valid explanation that made possible a renewal of the old relations. And it is your duty to go to her, taking that letter with you. One glance at that portion that reveals the imposture, and her heart would open to you in the old sweet way, rest assured," I said.

"Possibly, but not necessarily, Marc. You seem not to take into consideration the deep repugnance that my cowardly desertion of her would inevitably give rise to in her heart, and that nothing is ever less resentful than those feelings that the consciousness of being scorned is said to engender in a woman's heart. Yet, even admitting this might be overcome, there

still remains another obstacle that you have not taken into account, and that is this: To approach her now, after all these years, with a view to reconciling her would require vastly more assurance, and at the same time far less appreciation of the wrong that I did her, than I can muster up."

"Again your reasoning is of a piece with the vaporings of the romancer's puppet," I said, impatiently. "If I did not know you well enough to know better, I should say these self-accusing, far-fetched sentiments were insincere. It would seem that the revelation had struck you upon the wrong side, and instead of bringing you joy, as it was natural to suppose it would, it had depressed and left you in a most inconsistent, unreal mood. A little time, and a bit of sane thought, together with one or two of those monkey-like, undignified somersaults that you sometimes indulge in, to get your liver back into the position from which your uncontrollable contortions shifted it while under the 'spell' of the preacher and Walton to-day, and you will see matters differently perhaps."

This friendly little thrust was just what was needed to bring him back out of his unreasonable mood. For at the recollection of the trick he had played on them, he went off into a fit of laughter and side-racking chuckles. Then he sat for a long time, looking into the fire, whose steady, bright flame in the meantime had faded to a dull red glow, relieved at short intervals by a brief, tremulous flicker that

partly illuminated the remoter parts of the room, where the dancing shadows bowed and curtsied to one another like the figures in a fanciful dream.

Presently he looked up and said: "Marc, I have been wondering if you would not be my emissary to Jamestown? It may be only cowardice that restrains me, but I cannot bring myself to the thought of going to her until after some one else has explained it all and prepared the way for me."

Leaning forward, I laid my hand on his shoulder and said: "You know, or ought to know, Jeptha, that after all you have done for me, you can use me where and howsoever you will. Only I could not go now. A little later, and I am at your service."

"I understand, Marc," he answered softly, taking my hand in a friendly clasp. "I did not expect it now."

CHAPTER XXVI

Quite a crowd had already gathered at Magistrate Wyllys' house when we reached there shortly before ten o'clock on Monday morning, among them two other magistrates, whom, it soon developed, Squire Wyllys had summoned to sit with him. This discovery served to dissipate much of the hope that his honor's kind, considerate manner toward my fiancée on the occasion of her appearance before him two days before had had a tendency to encourage.

For the two magistrates were members of the Congregation and, in addition to their well known bias in matters of so-called witchcraft, were of an inferior order of intellect, both which facts were decidedly against her, if they could have their way, and as they were likely to, being two to one, even assuming that Mr. Wyllys would be favorable to an acquittal, as we had somehow come to feel he would be, for the reasons above given, scant as these might be. It was probably from some such meager cause for hope came the adage anent drowning men catching at straws, which it seems has never gone begging for an appropriate application since it was set adrift.

It was no difficult matter to perceive from the stern, lowering countenances of most of those present

that they would be very much disappointed if she were not held over to the grand jury at its sitting in May. For it is scarcely possible for strongly biased people to conceal their feelings, whether these be favorable, or otherwise.

And few indeed, compared to those whose countenances betrayed their adverse bias, were those upon whom we could reckon for a reasonable measure of sympathy and good-will. For outside of my own family, all of whom were there, including my mother, and Captain Wadsworth and his wife, and my friend Roland Wadsworth, and Governor Treat and Mrs. Treat, and Jephtha Allenberry and Owassa, there appeared to be none, notwithstanding we had been led by the unusual demonstration two days before to believe that public sentiment had veered somewhat, and that many of those that had hitherto been content to appear neutral would now rally to our support.

The chief witness, Saphira Walton, attended by her mother and coddled and made much of by certain of the Congregation, was likewise there when we arrived, showing that the diabolical purpose had in no sense abated with the incarceration of her father and the preacher. And directly after we had taken our seats in the room Elder Zachias Smith (who, now that the preacher was prevented from being present and acting in that capacity, had been nominated by the Congregation to look after its fancied interests in the prosecution of the case) made

his appearance. He was a long, lank, loose-jointed creature, of uncertain age, and had the dished chest and drooping shoulders of a pulmonic and the lean, sallow face of a cadaver, hence was well provided with an appearance calculated to strike terror to the heart of any timid or weak-minded witness. Likewise he had a mentality and force of character sufficient to lead such wheresoever he would by the words that he put into their mouths, which is precisely what such agent or representative of the Congregation did in each and every instance of the kind, arrogating to himself the rights and prerogative of his Majesty's justices to conduct inquisitions of this and a similar character. Said justices, in consequence of their utter subserviency to the Congregation, submitted to with seeming relish in most cases, rendered their verdicts in conformity with the known or expressed wishes of such mouthpieces of the Congregation, and therefore rendered themselves nothing more than mere figureheads of justice.

Hence, a knowledge of the law, or the technical terms appertaining thereto, was in no sense necessary in the prosecution of one charged with witchcraft especially any more than a mastery of it and its technical terms and peculiar phrases availed anything in the defense of any one so charged. For instead of allowing counsel for the defense to sift, and possibly entangle, the witness suspected of perjury, the magistrate upon some pretext or another almost invariably denied this just and lawful right, just as without

warrant of law, or the shadow of justice, they allowed the mouthpiece of the Congregation (which was always the minister, or some one of its members delegated by it) to put the words into the mouth of the witness and lead him or her to say what they would.

And although we had Jephtha Allenberry (who, after the revelations of the letter to that effect, owned to me that he had at one time been reasonably well versed in the law) to look after the defense, yet, for all this, it would have availed—But then that had been premature.

Presently Squire Wyllys announced the Court as sitting, and ready to proceed with the inquisition. And then, after commanding silence and order in the room, he requested Miss Crandal to come forward and take the seat appointed for her near the Bench. But when her father and mother would have gone likewise and seated themselves with her by way of encouraging and sustaining her through the new and trying ordeal, Squire Snowden forbade them, observing, with a ring of sarcasm in his tone, that, as he understood it, only the young lady herself was cited in the writ of arrest for her appearance before them, and they must remain where they were.

Thereupon Elder Zachias Smith unwound his long, spindling shanks from the bottom of the chair, about which he had so awkwardly twined them on first taking his seat, slouched forward, and got upon his feet. In addition to a pair of steel-framed spec-

tacles, he held in his hand a carelessly folded paper that, after adjusting the spectacles on his nose, he commenced very leisurely and somewhat ostentatiously to unfold.

A moment later he began in a high-pitched, rasping, nasal tone to read from said paper the following arraignment, the orthography whereof methinks it best to retain, to wit:

"Helen Elizabeth Crandal, thou standest here charged, by ye name aforesaid, as being guilty of witchcraft, for that thou, not having the feare of God before thine eyes, hast had familiarity with Sathan, ye grande enemie of God and man, and by ye help of ye said Sathan hath acted things beyond and beside ye ordinary course of Nature, and hast thereby hurt ye body of one of ye subjects of our sovraigne Lord, ye King; for which by ye law of God and this congregation thou oughtest to die. What sayest thou, Helen Elizabeth Crandal, guil——"

"Your honors!" interrupted Jephtha Allenberry, coming suddenly to his feet, "your honors, I object to such an improper, irregular, and unheard-of arraignment! In his ignorance of the law and the rules of procedure in such matters as the present case, the Elder had gone beyond all precedents and copied and here read the form in which the grand jury is wont to utter its indictment upon a charge of witchcraft after it has heard and duly weighed the evidence appertaining thereto.

"It is true, your honors, my fair client stands here

charged with witchcraft, just as you or any other body unfortunate enough to have gained some one's ill-will might be, so wild and fantastic is the belief of the people in such things, but until she has been proven guilty the law reckons her innocent, as you very well know, and until shown guilty beyond peradventure, certainly not deserving of death, as the worthy Elder declares, and would have you and all these people believe.

"Furthermore, your honors, I would have you to know that *I* know that it is the duty of this court, and not the prerogative of the Congregation's mouthpiece as the presumption of the Elder would have you believe, to make this arraignment and to conduct this inquisition. And as this young lady's counsel, I am clearly within the limits of my rights and the rights that the law vouchsafes her when I demand that you, and you alone, do so conduct this examination, and that, too, to the utter exclusion of the Congregation's mouthpiece, be it Elder Zachias Smith, or Tom, Dick, or Harry."

Then, after a moment's pause, during which he half turned and surveyed some of the lowering faces about him, two of the darker of which he encountered being those of the two associates of Mr. Wyllys, as he turned back facing the Bench, he went on, but in a mollifying, ingratiating voice:

"I very well know that by some here it is regarded in a way as highly unbecoming in me to defend one charged with exercising the selfsame species of devil-

try to which, only two days ago, they heard, or saw, that I myself yielded in a fit of affliction at the hands of the minister and one of the members of the very Congregation that now seeks to fasten upon this young lady the crime of witchcraft. Nor is it strange, perhaps, that you entertain such thoughts, and deem my course inconsistent, and out of the ordinary.

"But to all such, and likewise to your honors, I do declare upon my sacred word of honor, and as one whose pledged word not even the most skeptical among you dare come forward and gainsay to my face, that I know of a verity, and therefore beyond peradventure, that this young lady is as free from practicing the arts of witchcraft as the angels in heaven.

"Furthermore, your honors, I will prove it to the satisfaction of all here present, if only given the chance. And that, my friends, is my excuse for standing here in her defense.

"And now, your honors, I have done for the present, except to say that we are ready, and await a proper and lawful arraignment at your hands, and not at the hands of the Congregation's mouthpiece, or any other body." And as he uttered the last words he withered the Elder (who at the very outset of his address had wilted, as it were, and sunk back in his chair) with a look of such ineffable scorn as but one in a million here and there is able to concentrate in a single glance of the eye, or a solitary curl of the lip.

The silence that followed his closing remarks was

presently broken by Magistrate Powell, who, after a pretense of clearing his throat, shifted his position slightly and said:

"For the benefit of the young woman's counsel, it may be as well to say here as for him to discover it later on that this court hath an infallible way of getting at the guilt or innocence of any one brought before it on a charge of witchcraft, and that too without resorting to the slow and tedious methods pursued in other cases, entailing the examination of innumerable witnesses. It is a way of affording us the witness of our own eyes, as you shall presently see.

"Mr. Constable," he went on, in the same irritating and aggravating tone, as a murmur of expectation swept round the room, "see that order is restored and then conduct the young girl whom it is alleged the prisoner afflicted and seat her there in the witness-chair."

Thereupon the deepest silence ensued. And then, after the Walton child had taken the seat indicated, the justice turned to my fiancée and said:

"Young woman, I suppose thou knowest thou hast been brought hither and arraigned before this court on a charge of exercising the art of witchcraft, and for myself and associates here upon the Bench, I now ask thee why thou didst afflict this poor child at the time and in the manner charged in the writ of arrest?"

Without a moment's hesitancy, Elizabeth answered calmly, "I did not afflict her in the manner

charged, nor in any other manner whatsoever, your honor."

"And dost thou mean to deny that thou hast entertained familiarity with Sathan and didst not exert upon this poor child the influence that it is well known that Sathan imparts to his familiars here on earth? Perhaps thou wilt be saying next that thou hast the feare of God before thine eyes?"

"I can say, your honor, and speak truly, that I have not only the fear of God before my eyes, but a deep and holy love for Him in my heart, insomuch that I could not by any means find it in me to bully and browbeat a helpless creature of His, thrown by misfortune upon my mercy."

The justice shifted somewhat uncomfortably in his seat, and then blustered out: "But thou didst not answer my question, young woman, anent thy familiarity with Sathan."

"My answer to your second question, your honor, or rather to your insinuation relative to the fear of God before my eyes, made any reply to your first unnecessary, if your perception is equal to a very simple and easily digested proposition," she answered, very composedly.

"Eh?" he ejaculated, uncertainly. "I do not think I understand thee fully, young woman."

"It is quite likely you do not, your honor. But that you may be able to comprehend me better, I will simplify it by saying: The love of God in one's heart, which, if you remember, I claimed to have in mine,

makes impossible familiarity with Satan, since it is scarcely reasonable to suppose that the same abode would suffice for both God and Satan at one and the same time, though I fancy there are some that imagine that they have God in theirs when in reality it is the devil instead, whose subtilty, aided by their own simple-mindedness, has enabled him to impose upon them."

"Thy meaning, meseems, is less clear, young woman, than it was before. I wish thou wouldst cease speaking in riddles and talk clearly and to the point, and not clutter the court's comprehension with meaningless words and phrases."

"I am afraid it is impossible to be more explicit in the sense of my meaning, your honor, without being accused of a lack of respect for, and incurring the animosity of, the court, of which you are an important integrant," she replied softly, and in a well feigned tone of mingled deference and deprecation.

The magistrate looked around helplessly at his associates, one of whom (Mr. Wyllys) was smiling covertly behind the hand wherewith he made believe to stroke his beard.

"Heaven help us!" he finally exploded, "she grows more and more enigmatical in each succeeding answer! Young woman, thou hast naught to gain by cumbering this inquisition with irrelevant and meaningless answers to the court's questions. And I now charge thee to answer me clearly, shortly, and to the

point, whether thou didst not, on the date specified in the writ heretofore alluded to, use, practice, and exercise in the town of Hartford, and county of like name, certain detestable arts, called witchcraft and sorceries, upon and against one Saphira Walton, tormenting her against the peace of our sovraigne Lord, the King, and against the form of the statute in that case made and provided?"

"Before God, I did not, your honor. Nor do I know anything whatsoever of such arts and practices as you have named."

"And dost thou make this declaration with the feare of God before thine eyes?" he queried, with a sinister scowl.

"I make it not only with the fear of God before my eyes, your honor, but with what I am persuaded is a saving hope in His holy and adored son, Christ Jesus," she replied, reverently.

The magistrate looked at her questioningly, shook his head doubtfully, and then said:

"I greatly feare me, young woman, that thou art either wholly ignorant of the wickedness of such presumptuous asseverations, or art consciously wicked, and lost to all sense of shame.

"However, we shall soon know if thou hast spoken truthfully, or whether thou art in bondage to Sathan.

"Helen Elizabeth Crandal, I now command thee to lift up thine eyes and look upon the child thou art accused of having wickedly and feloniously afflicted!"

Thereupon she turned and fixed her eyes upon the girl, and instantly the little hell-cat stiffened back in her chair, quivered convulsively for a moment, and then tumbled to the floor and repeated the old trick of the street.

CHAPTER XXVII

The immediate effect of this wholly unexpected move on the part of the credulous and superstitious fool, playing the rôle of inquisitor in the examination, was a profound and deathlike silence, relieved only by the audible contortions of the little imp in the enactment of her well affected fit.

Then came a kind of buzzing sound, then a gradually increasing hum of voices that presently rose to a regular uproar, punctuated at short intervals by hisses and cat-calls on the part of one here and there who saw through and condemned the base trick by which it was sought to make believe that they had ample proof on which to hold my fiancée over to the grand jury at its next sitting in May.

All were upon their feet now, some of the more excited gesticulating wildly and pressing forward, but whether for a better view of the little fit-affecting hell-cat or with the idea of doing violence to my fiancée I knew not, nor waited to see. For, whipping out my sword, I sprang quickly to the side of the chair where she still sat, calm and seemingly undisturbed by the uproar around her, an act of precaution instantly understood and imitated by both her father and mine, and likewise by my friend Roland

and Captain Wadsworth, Jephtha being already upon his feet between her and those crowding forward, while Owassa, half crouching, like a beast of prey ready to spring at the opportune moment, had a position by the chair from which the little impostor had just tumbled to the floor, all of us ready for any emergency.

The precaution proved unnecessary, however, as Squire Wyllys came quickly to his feet and ordered all back to their seats, on pain of being ejected from the room, and immediately order was restored, except for a partly suppressed snarl or growl heard here and there over the room.

Eben Sawter, the constable, was then instructed by his honor to maintain quiet, even if it became necessary to eject the offenders bodily, the accomplishment of which the well known prowess of that individual made easily possible, if the necessity for it came.

Thereupon Squire Powell, who in the meantime had been smiling and wagging his head complacently while congratulating himself to that piece of like ignorance and superstition, Squire Snowden, cleared his throat ostentatiously, and said:

"It now behooves the court to announce that the test, though successfully and satisfactorily begun, is not yet complete. And that there may not be anything to interfere with the proceedings pending its completion, I request perfect quiet and order in this room, and forbid any undue demonstration at its

conclusion, when this young woman's league with Sathan shall have been established beyond peradventure.

"Young woman," he continued, turning toward my fiancée, "it was scarcely to be supposed that thy effrontery and shamelessness would carry thee to the extreme of exercising thy nefarious art right here before this court and all these people. I had but one hope that such wouldst be the case, and that was that thou wouldst be carried away with the temptation to afflict again this poor child, and the result proved that I did not judge thee amiss.

"And see with what indifference and unconcern that poor child's sufferings are regarded by thee, which goes to show the hardness of thy heart, and to prove beyond peradventure that it is one of the chosen abodes of Sathan, and therefore a stranger to compassion.

"And that she may not suffer longer through this cruelty of thine, I shall now command thee to be blindfolded and then to touch her with thy hand and bring her back out of the horrible fit into which she was thrown by thy baleful eye.

"Mr. Constable," he went on, turning to Eben Sawter, "thou art now commanded to take this handkerchief of mine and bind it over the eyes of this young woman, after which thou shalt conduct her to the side of that poor suffering child so she can lay her hand on her, and break the spell which her wicked and despicable art made possible."

Immediately Jephtha Allenberry was upon his feet again, saying in protest:

"Your honor, I should hate saying anything that might be construed as a reflection on your course in this matter, less, believe me, out of fear of the consequences to myself, should I be adjudged as being in contempt, than from being considered lacking in respect for this court, a branch of the judiciary which I have always revered, and hope I shall forever have cause to revere, scarcely less than those of a wider range of jurisdiction. Nor shall I say anything that might be so construed, if speaking only the truth as God has given me to see it, and expounding the law as I have it from the authorities to which we are all driven for our knowledge of it, his Majesty's justices no less than others.

"Yet, your honor, though I knew beforehand that I should be fined to the very utmost of my frugal savings and imprisoned to the very limit of your authority, I would nevertheless say what my sense of duty to my client and the law justifies me in saying. Yet not, please your honor, without an ever present consciousness of that high regard for the dignity attaching to and inseparable from the office of a justice of the peace. For albeit there are some known instances where the incumbent graced not the office, yet the dignity attaching to the office itself has ever survived the most unworthy incumbent's ignominious expulsion therefrom.

"First, then, your honor, I will say that, while

you may not have transcended your right as an individual, or even your prerogative as one of his Majesty's justices, according to your own interpretation of said prerogative, when you strayed beyond the pale of any written law and bade this young lady, in the seemingly innocent and irrelevant way you did, to look upon that little impostor now writhing and wriggling there upon the floor, yet I do say that it was unfair, and therefore beneath the dignity we are wont to ascribe to one of his Majesty's justices of the peace.

"And furthermore, your honor, knowing as I do and as a few others here present know, that yonder girl was *not* thrown into her present state *by* that look, I can conjure up but one reasonable excuse for your action, to wit: Your zeal for the cause of religion blinded and led you to enact the part you played (and would still play, according to your order to the constable) in what I and a few others here know to be as rank a fraud and imposture as was ever perpetrated on any but the most ridiculously credulous and superstitious people.

"But, your honor, until you can show a law authorizing you to do or cause to be done the thing expressed in your command to Eben Sawter, I, her counsel, shall protest against it. And that you cannot show lawful authority therefor I very well know, as others in this room likewise know. Nor can anything written in our statutes, even by the most woeeful distortion, be construed in a manner to justify

you in what you have done. And certainly there is nothing that gives you the right to compel her to submit to that which your order to the constable contemplates, and as her counsel I have a right to, and shall, advise her not to submit to it.

"And not only do I know there is no law authorizing you to do this thing, but I give you credit, your honor, for knowing there is none. You simply availed yourself of a precedent which was conceived in, and born of, superstition in a town of one of our neighboring Provinces, as you very well know.

"I do not believe, your honor, nor would I be understood as insinuating, that you are consciously playing into the hands of those whom I and others here know have plotted to have my fair client convicted on a trumped-up charge of witchcraft, and consequently had a foreknowledge of the fit that is being affected here before you by that girl. On the contrary, I desire only to show that you are allowing yourself to be guided by the precedent previously alluded to, and that in thus seeking to convict her at any cost, as it were, you are but treading in the footsteps of, and attempting to keep pace with, others of like excessive religious zeal in a neighboring Province.

"And now, your honor, touching my declaration anent the plot to convict my client of witchcraft, and my unequivocal assertion that yonder girl is merely enacting the rôle for which she has been rehearsing ever since the hour she perpetrated upon

the street the imposture that resulted in the charge upon which this defendant was dragged before this court, for the enactment of which imposture she was likewise diligently and assiduously trained, I beg to say that we are ready at any time it pleases the court to submit proof substantiating our claims in both cases."

"Again, for the benefit of the learned counsel," began Squire Powell, "I will say that it is the purpose of this court to complete the test already so well under way, upon which it is confidently relying for evidence of a character amply sufficient to justify it in holding this young woman over to the May sitting of the court of Assistants.

"Mr. Constable," he said shortly, "you will now proceed to execute the court's orders to you prior to the interruption of the learned counsel for the defense."

At this juncture the Hon. Mr. Wyllys, who occupied a seat slightly apart from, and to the left of, the other two magistrates sitting close together, leaned over toward Squire Powell and said something in a low, earnest tone. But the latter, with a surly, half defiant look, shook his head vigorously as he settled himself more firmly in his seat.

Mr. Wyllys then rose to his feet and stepped across to the other magistrate, Squire Snowden, and said something to him in the same low, earnest tone, but again to no purpose apparently, as he too, after a glance at Squire Powell, as if for his cue, shook

his head in a like dogged, positive, and disagreeable manner.

Thereupon Squire Wyllys turned and said that he did not by any means approve of the methods being resorted to by his associates on the Bench, and that he then and there washed his hands of that portion of the proceedings.

Then again Jephtha Allenberry rose to his feet, and had just said: "Your honor, I greatly deplore what your perseverance in an unjust, unlawful course forces me to say to——" when there occurred a slight commotion at the front door, and the next moment Candy, the old Guinea woman, tottered in.

For a second or so she hesitated, as if uncertain of her ground, or the motive for her presence there. Then she straightened up as best she could under the handicap of age, said something in a low, querulous tone to no one in particular, and then advanced slowly and uncertainly to a point that chanced to give her a full view of the still writhing and wriggling form of Saphira Walton. Then instantly some such striking, startling transformation took place in her face, mien, and vigorous appearance as that described by Roland Wadsworth as having occurred on the occasion of her tigerish attack on the renegade a few nights before, in front of Ezra Walton's house.

And thus metamorphosed and vigorous-looking as a giantess, and her eyes seeming to emit greenish flashes, and her long, talon-like fingers closing and unclosing spasmodically, she took one swift, long

step in the direction of the little impostor, and then, regardless of the wondering, mystified court and the equally puzzled and amazed spectators and all, she cried out in a strange, inimitable voice:

"Sap'ira Wal'on! You debil's puppet, what Can'y vow she's do t'you las' night when she ketched you doin' dat same debil's trick an' 'spected what you goin' to'do heah, huh?"

At the very first sound of the old negro's voice the girl sprang to her feet, wild-eyed and terrified. Then, after one hasty, horrified glance at the strangely distorted face of the Guinea woman, now leaning menacingly forward, with her hands stretched threateningly near and fingers closing and unclosing convulsively as if already in the act of strangling the object of her vengeance, she leaped toward, and dropped on her knees at the feet of, Miss Crandal, crying out in her great and terrible fear:

"Oh, Miss Crandal! Please, please do not let her get her hands on me, or she will strangle me to death, as she vowed last night she would if ever again I tried to make believe you had bewitched me! And oh, Miss Crandal, I wouldn't a-done it, only they made me do it, so Daddy could earn the hundred pounds that Mr. Highland gave him to manage to get you convicted and burned for witchcraft!"

"Dat's right, chile! Dat's right, chile! Hebben be praised, you's done tole de trufe, an' Can'y no huht you now, honey! No 'ndeed, Can'y no huht you now, honey!" exclaimed the old Guinea woman.

Never, perhaps, was there such a commotion in the small compass of a twenty by twenty foot room, when the fifty or more people who had been able to crowd themselves in there had recovered from the surprise occasioned by the girl's unexpected confession of the imposture that she had been made to practice, presumably by her parents.

Loud and vociferous indeed in their expressions of disappointment were those whose expectation, encouraged to the very utmost by Squire Powell's only too apparent bias and unfair manner to believe that she would be found guilty, amounted to a veritable passion to that effect, so effectual in blinding them to all sense of justice and humanity are the prejudices of some people.

Of course, under the circumstances there was nothing to be done but discharge my fiancée. This was done by Squire Wyllys, albeit against the protests of Squire Powell, who had the unmitigated hardihood to pretend that he was sure that the girl had been frightened into a falsehood rather than into a confession of the truth. This, too, after Squire Wyllys had taken her in hand and questioned her at length, when she not only reiterated her admissions, but had supplemented them with other facts bearing on, and tending to confirm, the fraud, which said facts are not now considered essential to this narrative and are therefore omitted.

My fiancée expressed a desire to thank Squire Wyllys before going, and so we, together with her

father and mother and other friends, lingered until after the greater portion of the spectators (the most of them sorely disappointed at the turn of affairs) had quitted the room, when, in a pretty and modest way, she told him how grateful she was, not only for her acquittal, but likewise for his kindness and courtesy on the occasion of her appearance there two days before.

The reader can better imagine than I can possibly describe the lightness and buoyancy of my heart upon quitting those premises that blessed noontide. Verily meseemed—But then I will not rhapsodize.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Immediately after her acquittal my fiancée's father was taken with a whim that completely upset some of my calculations, and I had much ado to adjust my thoughts to the changes that it necessitated in some of the plans that I had already made for the future. For, provoked—beyond his usual placidity of mind and uncomplaining acquiescence in and ready acceptance of the decrees and rulings of fate—at the unkind treatment accorded his daughter by the people of Hartford, barring, of course, the few friends already enumerated, Captain Crandal decided to load the whole of his effects and family on his little boat and shake the dust of the town from his feet forever.

Thereupon ensued many little parleys, both as to the advisability of such a move and the place of destination, the latter especially being a question that it was no easy matter to determine. Nor was it finally settled until after we had called Jephth Allen (by which name we shall henceforth refer to him) in at one of our conferences, and he quickly suggested Jamestown, in the Province of Virginia. He advanced the idea that in Virginia they would be beyond the jurisdiction of the odious Andros, and therefore in far less danger from the machinations

of his particular favorite, the renegade, an advantage which no one could gainsay. And therefore Jamestown was unanimously decided upon as the place of destination.

Thereupon my father, appreciating the advantage of a residence beyond the dominion of that insufferable tyrant, and not liking the idea of being separated from me, his only son, who had announced my intention of accompanying them thither and making that my future home after Elizabeth and I had consummated in marriage there the espousals contracted several months before in Hartford, decided that he would move to Jamestown also. And to that end he lost no time in resigning his seat in the Assembly, and then went about disposing of such personal effects as we could not conveniently carry with us.

And that we might all go together it was arranged that Captain Crandal should dispose of his boat, which was not of sufficient tonnage to carry the household goods and persons of both families, and that my father and he would then buy a larger one between them. And by the time this had all been attended to, and the partnership purchase overhauled and some needed repairs made, we were well-nigh ready to load our belongings, step aboard, hoist sail, and head for the Sound, and thence for our destination in the Province of Virginia.

One of the things that more than all else influenced Elizabeth and me in postponing our nuptials until after we should reach Jamestown was the odious law,

previously referred to as having been imposed by Sir Edmund Andros, entailing upon the would-be benedict the necessity of first filling a bond.

Now when my friend, Roland Wadsworth, became aware of our purpose to move to Jamestown he forthwith besought my parents for the hand of my sister Jocelyn in marriage, thinking thus, of course, to keep her there. But they, being exceedingly loth to leave their only daughter behind, granted not his request except upon the condition that he would first accompany us to our new home with the full and determinate expectation of making his future abode near them. And so potent is love to carry people out of their wonted, or predetermined, course and away from old environments and lifelong attachments, he consented to their terms and began making his arrangements accordingly to accompany us.

It is just possible that Jephtha did not have in mind the opportunity it would afford him to return thither when he nominated Jamestown, albeit I twitted him with having had some such selfish motives when I bade him get ready and go with us. For by now I knew he was very anxious to find out if Anna Fordyce were still free to receive his overtures for a reconciliation, or would receive them if she were still free to do so, either of which contingences had been sufficient to keep him in hot water, as the saying goes, ever since the revelation afforded by the renegade's letter.

And when Owassa came to know my purpose to

quit Hartford, Indian-like, he would have concealed the distress it caused him, but could not, and ended by asking wistfully if I did not think he might be of service to me, either on the way, or after we had arrived at Jamestown. If I thought so, he urged, it would afford him much pleasure to accompany me, especially now that so few of his tribe were left, and that they were so widely scattered that he should scarcely know where to seek a Mohecan other than the old brave that then had his solitary wigwam in the outer edge of Hartford.

And although I knew not then, nor felt that I should need him, yet his tone and mien were so wistful and his expression of countenance so much nearer a show of emotion than it is in the nature of an Indian to display, I did not have it in my heart to deny him. Hence it was that he too went aboard with us when the time for our departure came, thus making a crew of six men. And to his fortunate presence with us is due, no doubt, the fact of my continuance in the flesh to regale thee, kind reader, with whatever there is of interest in these memoirs.

Of course it became necessary for Roland and me to secure our release from the trainband. But in this matter we experienced no trouble.

Pending our preparations for the journey, which occupied something like a month, the temperature had risen to a degree favorable to rainfall in sufficient quantities to bring on a small freshet and release the river from the icy fetters that bound it, the un-

certain duration of which serious impediment to navigation had caused us no little concern in the outset of our preparations.

It was the latter part of February when we finally went aboard our staunch little craft, weighed anchor, and then drifted out into the troughlike current of the slowly receding tide, headed for the Sound, well supplied with provisions for any necessary or unavoidable delay and a goodly supply of arms and ammunition for any reasonable emergency.

It was a beautiful day, with a hint of spring in the atmosphere, yet we dared not flatter ourselves that it was not merely a weather-breeder instead of an earnest that winter was over, and that we should not be overtaken with storms and a lower temperature ere we reached our journey's end. For the season was not yet far enough advanced to warrant us in hoping for a continuance of anything like such favorable weather during our voyage out around the northeastern point of Long Island, and thence southward along the coast of the Jerseys to the mouth of the James.

It was scarcely eight o'clock in the morning when we started from Hartford, and as the current was somewhat accelerated by the receding tide, we reached Saybrook before nightfall. There we cast anchor and lay up until the next morning, in accordance with an understanding that we had reached before embarking, to the effect that we would make the voyage altogether in daylight, and thus reduce the

chances of accidents and mishaps to the minimum, or as far as such precautions might tend to do so. For it is not possible to forestall casualties upon water by even the most far-sighted precautions any more than it is upon land, howsoever much the chances of such mishaps may be diminished thereby.

A strong breeze from the southwest enabled us to move eastward from Saybrook the next morning with reasonable speed, and by noon we were rounding the eastward end of Long Island, some fifteen or sixteen miles south of the little string of small islands south of the mouth of Mystic River, from which point we headed southwestwardly along the coast.

As we were passing the little string of islands above referred to we perceived what appeared to be a boat about the size of our own, but thought nothing of it at the time, as such vessels were reasonably numerous in those waters. Along about six o'clock that afternoon we came to anchor opposite the mouth of a small creek putting out from that side of Long Island, something like twenty miles down the coast. The wind had shifted in the meantime until it came from the south, with some signs of a squall if not a veritable storm, and we took the precaution to drop both anchors.

However, by dark all indications of anything of the kind had vanished, leaving us wholly without apprehensions from that or any other source.

It was a delightful evening. The south wind, which a short time before had given us some anxiety,

had dropped to a soft breeze that tempered the twilight and ushered in a night almost as pleasant as a night in May, and overhung with a clear sky, wherein the stars twinkled with unusual brilliancy, and their reflections blent and shimmered in the little hollows of the sea about us, or gleamed in the crests of the low incoming and outgoing waves. And after we had partaken of the evening meal, and the two girls had assisted their mothers in clearing the board and washing the dishes, all of us young folks seated ourselves upon deck, where Jeptha, whenever conversation showed a tendency to lag, regaled us with one of his touching love ditties. And despite the brightness of the night and the apparent remoteness of danger from any source, a spirit of melancholy seemed to hover over the scene, insomuch that our voices, as I now recall them, were subdued, and our laughter tempered with a strain of sadness, as if our souls had been accorded a forecast of what the night held in store for us.

And the sea was restless, and murmured unintelligible things to the night, like the sad-hearted, dreaming. Perhaps it was calling to the wind, its truant, wayward mate, whose fierce and passionate caresses it missed, and whose wild trumpetings it longed to hear. For the wind and the sea are lovers from of old, and the sea is never happy when the wind is away dallying with the clouds or keeping his tryst with the spirits of the forest, and it sighed, as a maiden that doubts and mistrusts her lover sighs.

And upon the aureate wings of those sweet and alluring imagings, which the sough of the sea in our ears and the murmurings of love in our hearts awakened, we (I speak only for Elizabeth and myself) were carried away into that mystical realm, where all men and women, under the spell of love and made speechless by the ecstasy that renders them insensible to the bitter possibilities that lie in wait at some trend or turn in Life's journey, are borne for a glimpse and a taste of love's ideals and unalloyed sweets.

And so long as two hearts experience joy in making these journeys together the golden shackles that bind them are in no danger of being converted into irritating and galling bands of steel, which one or the other would fain rend and go in quest of another, only to awake at last a prey to the inevitable canker of unrest, if not indeed to the yet more malignant one of heart-consuming regret. For one is never able to cast out the corpse of a dead love from his heart, and woe necessarily betides the one forever doomed to carry in his bosom a heart wherein love's throne has been changed into a bier, whose drapery of would-be forgetfulness memory is ever pulling aside and forcing him to look upon the face of the once all in all.

By ten o'clock we had all sought our couches, all except Owassa, who, under the pretext of not yet being sleepy enough, had lighted his pipe, drawn

his beaver robe about his shoulders, and seated himself for a long smoke.

"The son of Oneca is a poor sleeper at best," he had replied to my suggestion that it was time to retire, "and must first feel the drowsy touch of the spirit of dreams before disposing himself for slumber."

CHAPTER XXIX

For some cause or other I was unable to sleep, although it was after ten o'clock, and I had felt quite drowsy about the time I went to bed. Instead, therefore, of dropping to sleep as was expected, I fell to thinking of this and of that, and finally to wondering why Owassa did not come on down and turn in.

Then of a sudden it occurred to me that possibly some instinctive feeling or apprehension of danger had prompted him to remain on deck, and was still keeping him there on the lookout, and naturally this thought made me even more wakeful and correspondingly restless. Presently I decided to join him and keep him company. To this end I had just slipped on my moccasins when I heard him coming hastily down the hatchway and realized that something was wrong, and before he could reach the quarter where I was, I met and asked him what it was.

"A boat, much like ours and coming from the same direction as we, has dropped anchor less than an arrow's flight from us," he answered hurriedly, "and canoes filled with warriors are putting out from it and heading this way."

Even before he had concluded I had rushed back and called Jephtha and Roland, then hurried aft

and called my father and Captain Crandal. But before they could possibly dress and join Owassa and me at the foot of the hatchway, we heard the enemy clambering up the side of the vessel.

Thereupon Owassa and I, followed a moment or so later by the other four, rushed above, only to find at least a score of the red devils tumbling onto the deck. Waiting not for the rest of our little band, Owassa and I brought our pieces to bear and fired, and two of them toppled backward into the sea.

By this time my father and the others were beside us, and the next instant four more shots rang out, and we had the satisfaction of seeing three more of the miscreants throw up their hands and tumble backward into a watery grave. Having no chance to reload our pieces, we now clubbed them and dashed forward right into their midst, striking right and left with the strength and viciousness of desperation. And had it not happened at that instant that the renegade himself sprang from his canoe on to the deck and rallied them from the panic into which our violent and determined onslaught had thrown them, I am certain we could have beaten them, despite their odds of three or four to one. For three more of them had already gone down with crushed heads from the overhanded blows of our clubbed pieces, and all were giving back before us, when the renegade, with oaths and execrations, checked and forced them to a vicious charge.

At the sight of this devil in human shape I

gripped my piece still more firmly and sprang toward him, determined to brain him in his tracks. But he saw and recognized me in the selfsame instant, and the sword that he had already drawn with a purpose to use it on whomsoever he should first come in contact with he quickly turned and held in readiness to plunge into me. But with a well directed blow I struck it from his hand, and had just lifted my piece again and was in the act of bringing it down with crushing force on the top of his head, when my right arm was utterly paralysed by a blow from a tomahawk in the hands of a powerful Pequod, and my rifle fell to the floor, while I was seized and borne backward onto the deck by four or five of the miscreants, any one of whom was nearly as large and powerful as I. Instantly Owassa leaped forward and dealt one of them a death blow, and he sank and fell sprawling across my breast. But before he could bring his rifle down upon the head of another of my assailants, three or four of their comrades were upon him, striking with tomahawks and hunting-knives in a way that made his escape from instant death utterly impossible, it seemed. And when a moment later I saw him sink limply to the floor, and the next lifted bodily by them and heaved overboard, I felt that it was all over, and that the death of all of us was but a matter of a few seconds only. For in the selfsame instant that Owassa had gone down I had seen Jephtha and Roland both overcome at the hands of seven or eight of the red devils,

and doubted not that my father and Captain Crandal had suffered the same fate.

In a minute or so my hands and feet had been securely bound with heavy deerskin thongs, and from where I lay I could see that Roland and Jephtha were likewise being bound, but, owing to the fact that they were beyond my range of vision, which was narrow and difficult enough because of the dead Indian across my breast, I could not see what was being done with my father and Captain Crandal. If not killed outright, it was reasonable to suppose that they too were being bound.

Presently the renegade, whose voice I had heard here and there as he gave orders to and urged on his hell-hounds, stood over me. And a more malignant face than the pale light of the newly risen moon revealed when his appeared at that moment of his triumph never grinned down upon a helpless mortal.

"You make a good bier for a dead Pequod, Lieutenant Law," he taunted, "a far better one I fancy than either you or your fair enslaver is likely to have after death at the stake to-morrow. For the fun of roasting you and her at the stake is to be the reward of these faithful braves you see about you.

"And, by the way, that reminds me that I have not yet had an opportunity to pay my respects to the fair Elizabeth, or your beautiful sister either, a courtesy which I must not neglect longer than possible.

"Here, you red imps!" he broke off, "carry my

friend Law aft and lay him with the other prisoners, so that two or three of you may be able to guard them all, while the rest return to my boat for a good half night's sleep. For after such valiant service you should have sleep, the better to enjoy what I have promised you for the morrow.

"As for myself, Lieutenant Law, I shall manage to find a way of passing the night. The fair Elizabeth should be apprised of what awaits you and her on the morrow, and as she is likely to be rather wakeful after it, it will be a boon to have an old friend to talk to, don't you think?"

God in Heaven! How I strained at the cords that bound and made me utterly helpless to resent what he hinted at. How I wanted to get at him and tear his very heart out and trample it under my feet. Oh, how I now wished I had killed him that night at the Governor's, or had allowed Owassa to do so that other night at "The Spotted Fawn"! The thought of my precious one at the mercy of such a fiend was the most poignant suffering I had ever endured, and made doubly so by the realization of my utter helplessness and the fiendish grin with which he received the evidence of my only too apparent misery.

And in this state of suffering I was seized and borne back, in accordance with his previous order, where I found that the others, all securely bound, had been taken a few moments before, with a guard of two filthy-looking Pequods already on hand, both somewhat the worse for rum.

Presently I heard the fiend call for help to bind my mother, sister Jocelyn, and Mrs. Crandal, and immediately thereafter we heard their cries, succeeded by evidences of resistance, and again I sought to rend the thongs that bound me and go to their assistance, but to no avail, and I groaned aloud with the sense of my utter impotency. Then directly I knew that his minions were leaving our boat for their own, all but the two huge, diabolical-looking Pequods that he had set to watch us.

And now only the swish of the waves against the side of our barque, the muffled sounds of lamentation from below, and an occasional shriek, which I recognized as coming from my fiancée, disturbed the silence of a midnight at sea.

Presently a shriek that had in it the note of the last despairing cry of innocence at the despoiler's mercy rose from the boat's hold, and pierced and stung my heart as no poisoned dart could have done. Groaning in my very soul, I answered it with a cry equally hopeless and despairing.

Then came a commotion in the hatchway, and the next moment my fiancée, woefully disheveled, wild-eyed, and utterly distracted, came flying across the deck, crying to her father and me to save her. But the fiend was at her heels, and she had no more than dropped down beside us than he seized her by the arm and dragged her away, and back down the hatchway.

And then I prayed in my soul that she might die

of utter fright, or the awful shame of it, ere the fatal moment came, or that God would miraculously loosen my bonds for even one single minute, or fraction thereof. And, as if in answer to my prayer, I perceived at that instant a form creeping up behind the two rum-soaked Pequods. The next moment he dealt first one and the other a blow with his tomahawk that crushed in their skulls as if they had been only egg-shells. Then like a flash his hunting-knife severed my bonds. It was Owassa, come back from the dead, as it then seemed to me in my dull amazement.

Waiting not to free the others, he jerked me to my feet, and, with the single word "Come," he darted toward the hatchway and literally sprang down it, I at his heels.

There was a single taper sputtering in an iron socket in that quarter where I and the other younger men had had our bunks. This showed the fiend bending above the struggling form of my fiancée, in the act of trying to lift her on to one of the bunks. And before he could straighten up and turn at the sound of our rapid and necessarily noisy approach Owassa had seized him by his long black locks, jerked him flat of his back, and plunged his long, keen hunting-knife deep into his heart. The next instant the same keen blade circled the scalp-lock, and the Indian straightened up and waved above his head the prize that he had once before sought and that I had deprived him of.

Then, to make doubly sure of the renegade's death, he plunged his knife again into his heart, and I had it not in me to try to stop him, believing then, as I now do, that he was doing God's work in thus ridding the world of a fiend.

CHAPTER XXX

While Owassa returned to the deck and released the other four from their bonds I devoted myself to bringing my beloved out of the swoon into which she had gone immediately after realizing that she had been saved a worse fate than death.

And then after releasing the women folks, it became necessary to get rid of the three dead Indians that cumbered the deck and the corpse of the renegade that polluted the hold. Happily the sea was ready to receive them, and they were all quickly consigned to it, though not before Owassa had added the scalps of the three dead Indians to his belt. But most of all he prized the scalp of the renegade. And do you wonder that I never tired of looking at, and gloating over, it? My Christian training had not been deep and abiding enough to overlook those last dastardly attempts of his, and my only regret was that it had not been my hand instead of Owassa's that had dealt him the death-blow.

Despite the agonizing concern that I had experienced on account of the seemingly inevitable fate of my fiancée at the moment of Owassa's reappearance upon the scene from which scarcely more than

an hour before I had seen him lifted and thrown overboard, and therefore naturally believed him to be at the bottom of the sea, I was dimly conscious of the feeling that his presence there then was nothing less than miraculous. And we had no sooner cleared the boat of the carcasses of the brutes that his wonderful prowess had helped to provide as food for the deep sea things than I besought him for an explanation. And like almost all mysteries, it was simple enough, once you had come in possession of the key to it.

"When the son of Oneca," he replied, "perceived that he had no show against the five or six Pequod and Narragansett dogs by whom he was beset, and that you and his other white brothers were all at the mercy of the other hounds, he decided to feign death at the slightest blow. This came soon, as my white brother knows, and Owassa sank down, as you saw. By this ruse he hoped to gain time for thought and possibly a chance to render his white brothers aid. What followed, however, was wholly unexpected, yet was perhaps the best thing that could have happened, seeing how it has turned out.

"As soon as Owassa came to the surface after being thrown overboard he swam round to the other side of our boat, where he remembered a rope hung down to the water line. This rope served to support him, and finally enabled him to come easily aboard when the time for action came.

"From where he was the son of Oneca could

hear and understand all that was going on. He knew when the dogs left the boat and went back to their own just where you were, and that only two had been left on guard. The rest my brother already knows. Owassa is done."

And if he was conscious that he had performed a wonderful and most praiseworthy feat, there was nothing whatever in his manner, the expression of his face, or the tone in which it had been told, to indicate it.

As the night was pleasant and the moon gave light, we decided that we would not wait until daylight to resume our voyage, and therefore, without more ado, we hoisted our anchors and moved away upon our course.

Two days later, after one or two unimportant misadventures, we stepped ashore at Jamestown, in the Province of Virginia, where we were graciously received by the good people thereof and made to feel at home. And very soon thereafter we were all suitably and quite comfortably domiciled.

Then two weeks to a day from the time we had stepped ashore there a triple wedding took place at my father's house, and was celebrated with a big supper, and with an infair at Captain Crandal's the following day, and a dance at night. Not only this, but on the third day we enjoyed an infair dinner at the home of Jephtha's bride, née Fordyce.

For, despite all his gloomy forebodings, her love for him had withstood the test of time and the sup-

plications of other suitors, and therefore when she had been made acquainted with the circumstance that led to his desertion of her he had no trouble in reconciling her, and the result was the triple wedding referred to, they making the third couple, as the reader has no doubt already surmised.

It had been my intention to extend these memoirs so as to embrace an account of subsequent events in the lives of the three couples of us that commenced our matrimonial experiences there in Jamestown on the same day. Especially should I have liked to carry the reader along with us upon that most tedious and hazardous journey westward through the wilderness some three years later, when we went forth and effected a new settlement far to the west, in a region whose soil had never before received the impression of a white man's foot, so far as we knew, but into which Owassa had gone, and returned with such wonderful tales of its climate and unsurpassed fertility that we were unable to resist the temptation that his glowing account and highly figurative description of it gave rise to. Therefore as soon as we could make arrangements to that end the three couples of us (two now with an addition of one each to the family, and one with two,—to wit: Jephtha and his wife, who had discounted us with a pair of lusty twins), we bade good-bye to relatives and friends and set our faces in that direction, styling ourselves "The Forelopers."

But, realizing that even a partial account of our experiences on our way thither, to say nothing of the

trials and dangers that were crowded into the first few months after we arrived there, would make a story of greater length than would comport with my idea of what the like should be, I have abandoned the purpose, and so close with this.







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